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## Shaking the Military Pillar of Regime Support: A Closer Look at the Factors Influencing Military Defections during the Revolutions in Egypt, Libya, and Syria during the Arab Spring Movement

Sarah Kruger

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Shaking the Military Pillar of Regime Support:  
A Closer Look at the Factors Influencing Military Defections during the Revolutions in Egypt,  
Libya, and Syria during the Arab Spring Movement

AN HONORS THESIS  
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

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in the Departments of Political Science and Peace Studies

by  
Sarah Kruger  
May, 2013



PROJECT TITLE: Shaking the Military Pillar of Regime Support: A Closer Look at the Factors Influencing Military Defections during the Revolutions in Egypt, Libya, and Syria during the Arab Spring Movement

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## *Abstract*

Using Egypt, Libya, and Syria as primary case studies, this project qualitatively analyzes the recent uprisings in each of these nations with focus on what factors influenced soldiers to defect. Paying specific attention to the role of the international community, the power of nonviolent tactics, the influence of ethnic and religious divisions, and examining what happens when the opposition forces turn violent, these decisions by military personnel are deconstructed by analyzing their triggers. While the topic of military defections is a fairly new focus in revolutionary studies, this research serves as a talking point and gives insight into where future research could occur.





## *Introduction*

*"He aimed his AK-47 just above their heads, prayed to God not to make him a killer and pulled the trigger."*<sup>1</sup>

This statement describes the first time Ammar Cheikh Omar, 29, was ordered to fire upon unarmed protestors in Syria. Omar, born in Germany to Syrian parents, had moved to Syria in 2004 to Aleppo, a city in Syria's north, "with the aim of getting in touch with his roots, studying law, improving his Arabic and finding a wife."<sup>2</sup> In 2010 he was conscripted into Syria's military shortly before the Arab Spring Movement began with the Tunisian Revolution. He was then deployed to the Syrian cities of Dara'a, Duma, and Hama as part of the attempts by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to violently suppress Syria's own protests. Omar describes at first he and his fellow soldiers were "told that their main task was to defend the country against Israel" and "that the protesters were "terrorists" or "armed gangs" sponsored by foreign forces."<sup>3</sup> In Duma he was also ordered to attend interrogations as a scribe as prisoners, some as young as fifteen, were tortured. It was in Hama, "At noon on July 26, he said, he and two fellow officers decided to defect from their army base, changing into civilian clothes and jumping over the base's wall."<sup>4</sup> They would then travel by car and then foot to Hatay, Turkey where they met up members of the Free Syrian Army and settled into a refugee camp. Now Omar works as part of the rebel army smuggling wounded rebel soldiers into Turkey. While he says he fears for his

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect." *The New York Times*, , sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

<sup>2</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect." *The New York Times*, , sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

<sup>3</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect." *The New York Times*, , sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

<sup>4</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect." *The New York Times*, , sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

family who remained in Syria, he has no regrets and “My family knows I made the right choice.”<sup>5</sup> He also appeals for help from the international community saying that, “Hitler died in Germany, but awoke in Syria.”<sup>6</sup>

Omar’s story is not a unique one in Syria where defections have become common during the two year conflict. Across the Middle East and Northern Africa defections have played a key role during the Arab Spring Movement in determining the fate of authoritarian regimes that depend heavily on the military for power. This research project explores why soldiers have chosen to defect particularly focusing on the role of ethnic and religious divisions, the threat of international intervention, orders by the regime to violently crackdown on nonviolent protestors, and when the opposition becomes armed.

The interactions between the military and its corresponding regime and the relationship between the military and a nation’s civilian population are quite complex and at times conflicting. During periods of major internal unrest these relationships between the three actors, the military, civilian population, and regime, are further stressed. In addition, these relations and interactions tend to come under intense scrutiny not only by those directly involved, but also by the international community. It is during these moments of significant internal unrest that these ties between the civilian population, regime, and military play a central role in deciding the outcome of the conflict. Part of the reason the interactions between these three actors are of such extreme importance is that they are far from static and each country has its own unique power structure; therefore, each case unfolds differently. The commitment of the military to the regime

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<sup>5</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect." *The New York Times*, , sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

<sup>6</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect." *The New York Times*, , sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

and whether, and to what extent, the military sides with the popular uprising is one way the outcome of revolutions is often determined. When the military refrains from assisting the regime in its efforts to effectively control the nation, that regime's chances of survival is greatly decreased. As academic Zoltan Barany stated in his article regarding the role of the military during 2011 Arab Spring Movement, "no revolution within a state can succeed without the support or at least the acquiescence of its armed forces."<sup>7</sup> This concept that revolutions need the armed forces to either support them or at least remain neutral has been generalized by many renowned academics and is applicable to popular uprisings outside the scope of Barany's focus as well.<sup>8</sup>

Recently these decisive relationships between military, civilian population and regime have come under greater examination as their importance was brought to the forefront of the attention of scholars and the general public in 2011 during the momentous and heavily reported Arab Spring Movement. During this time the civilian populations of many countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East protested government policies to varying degrees with several of these mass protests resulting in complete regime change most notably Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. However, the unrest in this region started by the Arab Spring Movement remains unfinished; most prominent has been the continuing upheaval in Syria although other countries in the region continue to demonstrate varying levels of unrest as well. Therefore, the relevance of civil-military and regime-military relations in the area has not diminished since the Arab Spring's start over two years ago.

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<sup>7</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011) Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 24.

<sup>8</sup> Mark N Katz, "Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail," Aug. 29-31, 2003:1-12. Erica Chenoweth, and Maria J. Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press: 46. Sharon Erickson Nepstad. *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011: 128.

The academic community has spent a considerable amount of time analyzing the outcome of revolutions like those mentioned as part of the Arab Spring. As previously discussed, there has also been extensive research done concerning the role of the military in deciding the fate of popular uprisings. However, the importance of the specific factors that have influenced military personnel's decision to defect have failed to be fully explored. This is important since the role of the military during these dilemmas cannot be fully understood without further analysis or as long as the rifts within the armed forces remain overlooked. Therefore, these events can only be fully comprehended after the reasons soldiers defect, how the military influences the outcome of the uprising, and the overall nature of the revolution are adequately analyzed. Full analysis of the situation can also determine if there is the possibility of generalizing this research and its findings to other movements of similar natures.

This project examines the overall importance of military defections during periods of rebellion. In addition what qualifies as a military defection, regime, pillar of support, nonviolent movement, and effective control are clarified in the context of this project. My research primarily addresses which factors during rebellions have previously influenced military defections in revolutions and to what extent. Prior literature available on the general subject matter of military defections is first be analyzed in regards to the quality and methodology of the literature and how it contributes to this field. What material that is already available on the factors influencing military defections is also be examined. Specifically my project focuses on and examines the prior literature as well as blogs, interviews, and other sources of media there are regarding my three primary independent variables. These variables include: the influence of ethnic and religious divisions in the nation, the threat of international intervention, and armed opposition and the regime ordering violence against nonviolent protestors on military personnel's decisions

to defect. The three case studies I subsequently focus my research on include the revolution in Egypt and the uprisings turned civil wars in Libya, and Syria. My research starts with the beginning of the Arab Spring Movement in January 2011 and continues on to analyze the ongoing events in Syria up until the beginning of 2013.

The limitations of my research design are also examined in order show how I was able best proceed in a manner that was best able to adequately answer the questions regarding my hypotheses. First the revolutions in Egypt, Libya, and Syria are presented separately in order to give readers a general background on the movements. Next, each of my three hypothesis are presented followed by an examination of the role the independent variables—ethnic and religious divisions, international intervention, and violent crackdowns and armed opposition—in each of the revolutions. After I examined each hypothesis in conjunction with my case studies, I analyzed the validity of the hypothesis and how it generally stood up in light of the evidence presented by my case studies. After this analysis conclusions were made regarding the role of both internal and external factors such as the effect of ethnic and religious divisions, armed opposition in comparison to nonviolent movements, and the possibility of international intervention on military defections in the respective case studies. In addition to my conclusion, I also briefly address what more can be done to further contribute to this particular field of study. At the beginning of this project I believed research would demonstrate a positive correlation between the occurrences of military defections if there was the possibility of international intervention, if soldiers do not share ethnic or religious ties with the regime, and if the opposition remained primarily nonviolent. Conversely I originally thought there would be a negative correlation between the defections of military personnel if the opposition was armed.

The military during times of unrest has consistently proved itself as an important, if not the most significant, pillar of support for regimes, particularly ones of oppressive natures. Conversely, as the Arab Spring Movement demonstrated and continues to demonstrate in numerous countries throughout the Middle East and Northeast Africa, when the military withdraws their support for the regime it can have devastating effects on that leader's ability to maintain effective control. Instead this removal of support opens up these authoritarian regimes, particularly its leaders, to international condemnation for how they responded to the internal unrest. Based on how the regime ordered the military and the state police forces to interact with the general population during these periods of unrest, international intervention can become a possibility as well. It is important to note that international intervention is also often driven by the national interests of the countries intervening and regional dynamics. In more extreme cases, such as my case studies, with or without the presence of international intervention, the survival of the regime becomes greatly jeopardized during these events.

It is quite evident that the incidents of military defections demonstrate discontent as well as a change in the power structure of civil-military and government-military relations; however, these actions must also be sorted into a variety of categories. Defections as defined by my project will focus on the shift of loyalty by military personnel away from the regime. In the traditional sense this is often demonstrated by soldiers abandoning their positions by either fleeing the conflict zone or by taking up arms against the regime tend to receive the majority of the attention by both academics and the media. In addition, defections can also occur in a less sensationalized manner when soldiers decide to refrain from showing up for duty or when they refuse to carry out specific orders from the regime. For my purposes, defection will be defined as both of these actions and can be carried out by either an individual, small group, or by the military as a whole.

Full scale defection by the military as a single unit typically occurs when the command withdraws support for the regime on behalf of the entire armed forces. This type of mass rebellion will be considered a form of military defection regardless of whether or not the armed forces then take an active or neutral stance against the regime. It is also important to acknowledge that the factors influencing authority figures in the armed forces to defect or to declare their removal of support for a regime on behalf of the armed forces may be different than those impacting the decisions of individuals in the lower ranks. This is due to power incentives between these ranks typically being considerably different. Differences in the religious or ethnic makeup between the command and lower ranking military personnel can also factor into the different stances of these groups.

To clarify my research it helps to further explore several of the terms and concepts used in this project for those unfamiliar to this field and topic. First of all, I will use the term regime in its traditional sense as meaning a form of government, particularly one of authoritarian nature. As defined by Gene Sharp, the pillars of support for a regime are, “The institutions and sections of the society that supply the existing regime with the needed sources of power to maintain and expand its power capacity.”<sup>9</sup> Examples of pillars of support include: “police, prisons, and military forces supplying sanctions, moral and religious leaders supplying authority (legitimacy), labor groups and business and investment groups supplying economic resources, and similarly with the other identified sources of political power.”<sup>10</sup> Another concept that needs a more in-depth explanation is what qualifies as a nonviolent movement in comparison to a violent movement as almost all movements are neither completely violent nor completely nonviolent in

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<sup>9</sup> Gene Sharp, The Albert Einstein Institute, "There Are Realistic Alternatives." Last modified 2003, <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/TARA.pdf>: 35

<sup>10</sup> Gene Sharp, The Albert Einstein Institute, "There Are Realistic Alternatives." Last modified 2003, <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/TARA.pdf>: 36



nature. Using the work of academics Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan as well as Gene Sharp as a guide, movements can be labeled as nonviolent based on the prevalence of nonviolent methods and the observable participation by members of the movement in manners that are nonviolent in nature. On the other hand, while violent movements often operate outside the normal political forum like nonviolent movements, they predominantly rely on a strategy of armed struggle in attempts to achieve their political goal.<sup>11</sup> To further separate nonviolent and violent movements, I will be using the term violence in its fairly narrow sense as an actual physical attack that is done with the intent to injure I will also define effective control as a state's ability to carry out the basic tasks of providing security for itself and its civilians, formulate and enact policies, and reconcile freedom with equality.

During the predominantly nonviolent Egyptian Revolution the influential phenomenon of wavering military loyalties was clearly demonstrated. Defection was quite common during this revolution by individuals in the armed forces, particularly those of lower rank as many refused to report to duty and instead partook in the massive demonstrations. As the revolution progressed, the entirety of the military ended up withdrawing their support for the regime, although the military elites never publically sided with the nonviolent movement. Instead, they acted from within by pressuring Mubarak to step down only eighteen day into the revolution. This large scale action ended President Mubarak's ability to effectively control the nation and consequently resulted in the televised announcement of his resignation by Vice President Saleiman. Military loyalty has also become an increasingly difficult as well as more visible problem for the Assad regime in Syria as small and large scale defections have been highlighted throughout the conflict. Libya's eight month revolution turned civil war also demonstrated the role of the military as a

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<sup>11</sup> Erica Chenoweth, and Maria J. Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press: 12.

decisive factor as the armed forces split and many militants defected and took up arms against their former employer. Despite these three revolutions having unfolded quite differently, and that the conflict in Syria has remained ongoing, the magnitude of military loyalty to the survival of a regime is clearly highlighted in all three scenarios. While the importance of military defection has been demonstrated in each case study, the factors influencing military personnel to defect have varied. The weight of particular factors over others in influencing these defections is also rather unique. The relationship between the military and civilian population has also accounted for a significant portion of these differences in defections and, therefore variation in revolution outcomes. Ultimately, the goal of my project, as previously stated, is to address what factors, have influenced military defections in Egypt, Libya, and Syria during their respective rebellions. It is important to note that my scope of focus at this time does not include the overall outcome of the rebellions or the role of the military post regime change. Also I will view each country's police forces as being a separate entity from the armed forces as these two branches of enforcement serve different purposes, have different relations with the civilian population and the regime, and have reacted in dissimilar manners from one another during these revolutions. Therefore, focus will remain on the military, and the role and actions of the nation's police forces will not be analyzed in any depth in this project.

If defections are not addressed by the regime and continue spread, or if the armed forces as a whole decide it is in their best interests to side with a rebellion the effects of these actions can be devastating to the regime. In some cases the military may even fully withdraw its support for the regime. This action as presented by Barany, almost always results in the regime's collapse.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, as currently demonstrated by the situation in Syria, as long as the

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<sup>12</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011) Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 24.

majority of the military remains loyal to the regime and other external factors exert minimal influence, the conflict can become drawn out often accompanied by a heavy death toll and result in no serious change in regime standing or any internal reform. This will occur as long as the power balance favors the existing regime.

The intent of my research project is to add a new dimension to the study of revolutions through the examination of what influences military personnel to defect. Several fields of study have already done a fairly thorough job of dissecting the importance of military loyalty to a regime during a rebellion, and most academics have come to similar conclusions in that rebellions must gain the support of the military to successfully bring about regime change. Recent research that has had a heavier emphasis on statistical analysis during its examination of the greater effectiveness of nonviolent strategies against oppressive regimes in comparison to violent tactics has further challenged more traditional explanations.<sup>13</sup> However, the causes behind wavering military allegiance have been fairly neglected by research. I wish to further unite the more traditional study of revolutions with newer perspectives by examining the impact of several factors on defection, making sure to include the influence of nonviolence as a strategy utilized by revolutionary groups on soldiers' decisions to defect. In addition to the civil-military relationship, I will also analyze the impact of the international community and the role of the regime on soldiers' choices to defect, among other factors.

The specific hypotheses I will address that examine the factors influencing military personnel to defect include:

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<sup>13</sup> Erica Chenoweth, and Maria J. Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press

H<sup>1</sup> - Military personnel are more likely to defect if the opposition force is of the same ethnic or religious makeup as them and if the majority of the high ranking officials within the government come from a different ethnic or religious group.

H<sup>2</sup> - Military personnel are more likely to defect if the international community promises direct military intervention in opposition to the current regime.

H<sup>3</sup> - Military personnel are more likely to defect if the regime orders them to fire upon or in any other way violently crackdown on unarmed civilians and conversely, military personnel are less likely to defect if the opposition is armed and violent.

These original hypotheses were reached primarily by following the Western news during the Arab Spring Movements and my own curiosity. I noted that the topics of international intervention, ethnic and religious divisions, and the brutal crackdown by regimes and nonviolent tactics used by the opposition were often discussed and stood out the most to me. Therefore, I chose these three variables and the corresponding hypotheses to be my focus during this project to see if the perceptions I had of their roles on defection in each movement were accurate and if not, why.

While my research goals are somewhat lofty, I must also address the various limitations I face. I acknowledge there are many more factors that weigh into the decisions of military personnel to defect during periods of revolution than those listed above and that my research will not adequately address or analyze them all. However, limiting my independent variables will allow for more in-depth analysis and greater comparison between the case studies to determine if there are any significant similarities. There are also several restrictions I face in obtaining information. Travel to Egypt, Libya, or Syria to conduct on site research and personal interviews at this time are not feasible due to my ongoing education and high levels of unrest that continue

to plague portions of these countries. These travel limitations also suggest that there may be a decrease in the availability of primary sources, especially those published in English, to the outside world. Others wishing to report on the conflicts firsthand are likely to have experienced similar obstacles in traveling to the region. Another setback about being half a world removed from the places of interest is my lack of complete cultural understanding of the three nations. I have tried to familiarize myself on the roles of ethnic groups within the conflicts and the history of the regime leading up to the rebellion by examining other research articles and books whose focus is outside the duration of the Arab Spring Movement and on factors that have influenced the state of the nation outside that of the military. However, it would be foolish to claim the ability of having complete understanding of their cultural implications as an outsider. Lastly, the biggest obstacle from a cultural perspective that I will strive to overcome in my research is the language barrier as English is only language I am fluent in. Therefore, most of my sources have been published in English or in a few fortunate cases have been translated from the original Arabic to English.

There are also considerable difficulties involved with quantitatively analyzing military defections as well. Specific statistics on military defections by nation have proved impossible to acquire as these numbers are not publically published by any of militaries I have attempted to access. I also was unable to find military records regarding nations outside my scope of interest to use as control variables to make comparisons. Instead, most of the previous academic research I have found centered on military defections is focused on specific cases and not on the occurrence of military defection as a whole. This is likely due to countries' unwillingness to self-report on this problem. In addition defections during periods of major internal unrest are likely difficult to gauge when the conflict is violent in nature as accurate reporting becomes more

difficult. The idea of military defections is also not as clear cut as it first appears. To reiterate, I will define defections as the action of fleeing the service, taking up arms against the regime, refusing to report to work, or continuing to report to work, but refusing to obey specific orders. These actions of defiance by military figures can be taken by individuals, small groups, or the armed forces as a whole through decisions by the command. Therefore, due to the nature of the types of defections some are more heavily reported and receive more attention than others.

The conflict in Syria must also specifically be addressed. Due to the ongoing nature of this rebellion, conditions are liable to change without much warning and there is always a possibility that this movement could come to an abrupt end during the writing of this paper. These changes are also less likely to be adequately reported or be analyzed in a timely manner as the violence within the country has only been intensifying. Egypt also poses a problem, although interestingly enough because of its revolution's quick success and overwhelmingly nonviolent nature. Due to the movement's speed and unity, the focus of most academics has been on its more turbulent aftermath. What information there is on the role of the military and its interaction with the civilian population primarily focuses on the time after Mubarak stepped down rather than the events that occurred during the actual period of revolution.

Despite these numerous obstacles, examining the factors that influence military defections is still feasible. However, my research will have to take on more of a qualitative format than that of a statistical analysis due to the present availability of sources. As more time elapses since the end of the revolution in Egypt an increasing amount of academic articles are being published. This should shed greater light on the moments within the revolution and not just its aftermath. Same can be said of the amount of material focused on Libya's civil war. Although Syria is the youngest of these rebellions, the steady trickle of defections, greater duration,

increased violence by both sides, and international tension over how to proceed, seems to have attracted more media and scholarly attention. This has resulted in a plethora of sources giving significant attention to the role of the military and the factors that have influenced defection. Therefore, despite the numerous limitations to my research project, I am confident that there has been adequate material available to produce major findings regarding the factors that influence defections in Egypt, Libya, and Syria during the Arab Spring Movement.

## *A Look at the Existing Research*

The existing research regarding my topic must be broken down into several categories. The first section will explore the literature available on my dependent variable: military defections. While the focus of my research is on Egypt, Libya, and Syria, this section will serve to investigate what previous academic information has been published on military defections in general during periods of revolution. After that I will examine the information available on my independent variables individually. In this second portion I will specifically focus on the impact of ethnic and religious divisions, the threat of international intervention, regimes ordering violent crackdowns on nonviolent protestors and armed opposition on the likelihood of military personnel to defect during major periods of unrest. In some cases there may also be crossover between two or more of the independent variables, in which previous academics have found correlation between variables in connection to military defections. The methodology of the prior research in this field will be analyzed and gaps will be explored. In addition I will discuss how my research fits in with the existing literature.

Although the literature review section of my paper will highlight what academic work has already been done in this area, due to the movements' recent as well as ongoing nature purely academic sources will not adequately provide all of the information needed. To make up for this lack of depth regarding the topic's exploration in the academic community, I will rely heavily on primary sources that focus on my case studies as well as newspaper articles and blog posts. Although this is somewhat unconventional, primary sources as well as trustworthy news sources will serve to fill these current gaps in this field.

## **Military Defections**



Unfortunately for my project, the majority of research on military defections focuses little on what drives soldiers to defect, but instead emphasizes what impact military defections have on the survival of the regime. As previously discussed, statistics on military defections are not readily available to the public; therefore, much of the literature on military defections focuses on specific defections by individuals rather than the overall occurrence of defection. This prior research on the defections of individuals seems to be of little importance to my project since most cases examined are prior to the twentieth century. Research and general reports on military defection are also skewed because they primarily examine defection when it occurs as an order from the top ranks of the armed forces to cease cooperation with the regime. Studies on defection also have the propensity to focus on the actions of individuals that have fled the country as a form of dissent or taken up arms and joined the opposition. This leaves little analysis regarding the actions of individuals in the lower ranks or defections that occur in the form of individuals or small groups refraining from carrying out regime orders while still remaining in the service. However, there is still some general investigation regarding military defections during periods of revolution that has been published by academics.

Gene Sharp is an individual that stands out in the field of revolutionary studies for work that emphasizes the role of the military. Sharp has been heralded as the “father of nonviolent struggle” and has published numerous works on the subject of nonviolence and revolutions.<sup>14</sup> His influential works which can be found published in many languages as well banned in several nations most notably includes, “From Dictatorship to Democracy” which is essentially

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<sup>14</sup>Mairi Mackay, CNNWorld, "Gene Sharp: A dictator's worst nightmare," Last modified June 25, 2012. Accessed October 28, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/23/world/gene-sharp-revolutionary/index.html>.

considered to be “a 93-page guide to toppling autocrats”.<sup>15</sup> Sharp’s works have also been credited with inspiring and shaping the nonviolent movement in Egypt’s 2011 revolution. His work concludes that the military is the key pillar of support for regimes and that nonviolent tactics are more likely to result in defections than violent tactics.

Another example of research on defections would be a conference paper by Mark N. Katz presented at the 2003 Annual meeting of the American Political Association titled “Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail”. This paper analyzes six revolutions, three successful (The Philippines 1986, Russia 1991, and Serbia 2000), and three unsuccessful (China 1989, Burma/Myanmar 1987-1990, and Algeria 1988-1992). As Katz specifically addresses, all of these movements strove to create democratic reforms and all were greatly impacted by the actions of the military. Like other academics, he acknowledges “the key role played by the military forces charged with defending the existing regime in determining the outcome of attempts at revolution.”<sup>16</sup> He also examines which factors have previously led forces to defect. In the Philippines, Katz specifically cites resentment as President Marcos favored those close to him over those qualified for lead official positions. In Russia, the military, “rather than act to save the system...waited and watched, seeking to join the winning side.”<sup>17</sup> Lastly, Katz claims the revolution in Serbia succeeded since the armed forces were just as eager to oust President Milosevic as the rest of the Serbs; the command also determined at this time that military personnel were unlikely to obey orders to fire upon unarmed protestors. Therefore, from Katz’s analysis, it can be determined that military loyalty is largely impacted by the troops’ opinion of the regime, their relation with the civilian population, and the power interests of the military.

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<sup>15</sup> Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Shy U.S. Intellectual Created Playbook Used in a Revolution," *The New York Times*, February 16, 2011. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/middleeast/17sharp.html?ref=genessharp&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/middleeast/17sharp.html?ref=genessharp&_r=0) (accessed October 28, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Mark N Katz, “Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail,” Aug. 29-31, 2003: 2.

<sup>17</sup> Mark N Katz, “Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail,” Aug. 29-31, 2003: 5.

On the other hand, the revolution in Burma (Myanmar) failed because the military was willing to follow the orders of the regime and ended up using force against the democratic movement. The military opted to maintain loyalty since defection could not guarantee the same level of power. Likewise, China's democratic movement did not experience military defection, but in this case it was due to a lack of cohesion within the People's Liberation Army; therefore, while not all units utilized force against the people, they also did not oppose others using force. In Algeria, the movement was unsuccessful due to the military's hesitance to accept a larger role by the Islamic movement in politics and instead chose to prioritize its internal unity. Therefore, like the successful democratic revolutions case studies, these unsuccessful examples demonstrate that there are numerous factors that go into military personnel's decision to defect and that each case has its own unique factors.

While Katz has done an adequate job at addressing the factors influencing the armed forces to either continue to support the regime or turn against them, there is little other research out there that focuses on movements in this manner. Although there are other articles and books published on specific factors influencing revolutions, few take this reversed approach of focusing on each revolution separately and then dissecting the incentives of the military within the movement. My research serves to bring these two approaches together as I will examine each of my case studies separately; however, while I will still take other factors into consideration, I have a set group of independent variables that I will analyze in depth.

## **Ethnic and Religious Divisions**

Ethnic and religious divisions within military ranks also tend to complicate matters during periods of unrest. This is because in authoritarian regimes it is often the minority who holds the majority of the power and higher positions of authority in the armed forces. This

division and structure is often what enables the regime to remain in power during conflict. Theodore McLauchlin specifically examines this phenomenon of minority power in his article “Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion”. In this article he “distinguishes between two strategies to maintain military loyalty in ‘praetorian’ regimes—individual incentives (reward and punishment) and a policy of ethnic preference in the armed forces.”<sup>18</sup> These strategies, when utilized successfully by regimes, serve to prevent a cascade of defection during periods of rebellion. The concept of a cascade of defection refers to the idea that “as opposition increases, the likelihood that any given individual will become involved also increases.”<sup>19</sup> McLauchlin examines these two strategies by focusing on case studies and previous scholars’ work. In his case studies he examines three particular rebellions in the Middle East including the Muslim Brotherhood uprising of 1976-1982 in Syria, the unrest in Jordan during 1970, and the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979. From these movements he analyzes how individual incentives and ethnic preferences were demonstrated in each movement and to what effect.

Ultimately, McLauchlin adds to the discussion of the influence of ethnicity on defections by concluding that “favoring one ethnic group in terms of military recruitment for the sake of regime stability has two effects. First, it tends to increase the cohesion of ethnic out-groups, both within the military itself and in society at large” and “second, solidarity is likely to increase among members of a favored group as well.”<sup>20</sup> These conclusions then explain how “a cascade

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<sup>18</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 333.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 336.

<sup>20</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 338.

might occur in the out-group, but it should not make in-group members any likelier to defect.”<sup>21</sup>

To apply this to a specific case study for greater clarity, the out group in Syria would be the Sunni majority and the in-group would be the more powerful minority: the Alawites. Despite McLauchlin’s arguments, the article explains that ethnic divisions may still not be able to completely deter defections, as “defection can occur across ethnic lines if the state’s discourse allows for the possibility of ‘loyal’ members of an ethnic out-group.”<sup>22</sup> While McLauchlin’s work contributes significantly to explaining how influential ethnic divisions are to military defections, he fails to address the role of any external factors on ethnic divisions in regards to the choices of military personnel. My research will strive to go beyond this single variable focus by including other factors that influence military personnel to defect.

Sharon Erickson Nepstad, in her article “Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: the Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances”, also examines the influence of ethnic divisions on revolutionary movements in addition to numerous other factors. In her argument she proposes that “in nonviolent revolutionary struggles, if military personnel are comprised of different ethnic or religious groups that have unequal power relations to the regime, the likelihood that the military as a whole will side with the opposition movement is low.”<sup>23</sup> Conversely, in her book, *Nonviolent Revolutions*, Nepstad makes the claim that “defections occurred in some instances because troops shared a collective identity with civil resisters” such as a common religion.<sup>24</sup> She goes on to explain that a shared identity between the military and the civilian population as well as similar desires for political reform make it “difficult for troops to view civil resisters as

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<sup>21</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 339.

<sup>22</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 339.

<sup>23</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: The Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances," *Swiss Political Science Review*. 17. no. 4 (2011): 488.

<sup>24</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

unreasonable radicals.”<sup>25</sup> Like McLauchlin, Nepstad uses various case studies to examine her four theoretical explanations; however, in regards to the variable of ethnic divisions Nepstad focuses solely on Syria.

McLauchlin and Nepstad’s hypotheses regarding ethnic and religious division address the increased likelihood of defection when the military is better able to relate to the general population in regards to ethnic or religious identity in comparison to their ability to relate to the regime. These hypotheses can be furthered by comparing and analyzing movements that have occurred in other nations that are ethnically divided. However, my research will attempt to pinpoint why one movement suffered from this ethnic division, while it might not have played a significant role in the other movement even in a multiethnic country.

## Threat of International Intervention

Despite international intervention or the threat of it in opposition to the current regime being somewhat commonplace during periods of rebellion, there remains to be a minimal amount of literature that addresses this topic even briefly despite these events having significant implications on the outcome of movements. In addition, the amount of literature on international intervention in regards to how it relates to military defections is almost nonexistent. Instead, the vast majority of research surrounding international intervention focuses solely on if intervention is justified and moral and if it is beneficial to the country it is done on the behalf of. Therefore, I will add to the existing literature by examining international intervention and the threat of action by the international community on soldiers’ decisions to defect. This variable will be of particular interest in regards to the movements in Libya and Syria. Form this analysis I will

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<sup>25</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad. *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

determine if there is any promise of being able to generalize this effect to other revolutionary movements.

In support of the argument that international intervention has significant implications on the outcomes of revolutions, Chenoweth and Stephan claim that “violent insurgencies tend to succeed when they achieve external support”<sup>26</sup>. According to Chenoweth and Stephan, the likelihood of success increases because support by an external actor can help legitimize the violent insurgency and therefore increase the movement’s ability to recruit. While they do not connect this statement to the role of the military during revolutions, it would appear that the military would be more likely to act rationally and defect in attempt to preserve power if they perceive a greater likelihood of rebel success due to the intervention or support of an external actor. Chenoweth and Stephan also argue that while foreign governments are more likely to give support for nonviolent movements through financial assistance, training, diplomatic recognition, and sanctions, violent movements are more likely to receive direct material support. According to their research, “whereas 35 percent of the violent insurgencies received material support from a foreign state, less than 10 percent of nonviolent campaigns did so.”<sup>27</sup> They support this portion of their argument through the use of quantitative analysis from the NAVCO (Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes) data set as well as from an analysis of their case studies of Iran, the Palestinian Territories, Burma, and the Philippines. One problem that I face in applying Chenoweth and Stephan’s argument to my research design is that Libya and Syria both started out as nonviolent movements that then developed into civil wars although Syria has maintained a nonviolent component throughout. Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to determine how

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<sup>26</sup> Erica Chenoweth, and Maria J. Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press: 11.

<sup>27</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press: 54.

Chenoweth and Stephan would categorize these movements, or if they would refrain from using them as samples based on the NAVCO criteria. However, the general premise of their argument, that international intervention is more likely to lead to the success of violent movements, can still be applied to my project. This particular argument will be of specific interest during my analysis of defections during the movement in Libya.

## Impact of Ordering Violent Crackdowns on Nonviolent Protests and the Occurrence of Armed Opposition

The literature on the influence of nonviolence during revolutions is fairly extensive when comparing this variable to the other independent variables in this project. However, nonviolence is also a relatively new focus in the field despite its well documented history. The aforementioned academics Gene Sharp, Erica Chenoweth, and Maria Stephan are also some of the more well-known figures in the field of nonviolence in revolutions. Chenoweth and Stephan's recent and much heralded book *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* has begun to shed more light on this subject. However, in regards to their work's usefulness to my research, they tend to explore other factors more in depth than military defection as factors that lead to the success of nonviolent revolutions.

While not all of the material in *Why Civil Resistance Works* is relevant to my argument, Chenoweth and Stephan do an extremely thorough job of researching the role of nonviolence in popular uprisings using qualitative and quantitative research methods and an astounding number of samples in their data set. Their work concludes that revolutions with a nonviolent focus are significantly more likely to lead to victory for the rebel side and result in the replacement of an authoritarian regime with a democratic government. They also find that, "one common scenario leading to loyalty shifts is when the regime violently cracks down on a popular nonviolent



campaign with mass civilian participation.”<sup>28</sup> According to their work, a nonviolent conflict is also less likely to devolve into civil war. Their methodology includes a combination of quantitative analysis and case studies specifically focusing on nonviolent revolutions in Iran, the Palestinian Territories, Burma and the Philippines.<sup>29</sup>

While Chenoweth and Stephan’s book, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, focuses predominantly on the role of nonviolence as utilized by the civilian population, they also briefly examine its influence on the regime’s pillars of support, particularly the relationship between the armed forces and the regime. For example, they determine nonviolence to be successful in that “evidence of defections within the ranks of the military, for instance would suggest that the regime no longer commands the cooperation and obedience of its most important pillar of support.”<sup>30</sup> However, they do not “include routine individual defections” in their analysis.<sup>31</sup> Instead, Chenoweth and Stephan focus their research on “large-scale, systematic breakdowns in the execution of a regime’s orders.”<sup>32</sup> As cited by Mary Elizabeth King, Chenoweth and Stephan did find that “successful violent campaigns saw defections occur approximately 32 percent of the time, while successful nonviolent campaigns experienced defections about 52 percent of the time.”<sup>33</sup>

Like Chenoweth and Stephan, Katz discusses the significance of a regime issuing orders for its military to crackdown on a nonviolent opposition. Katz, who focuses on case studies of

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<sup>28</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press: 50.

<sup>29</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press

<sup>30</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press: 46

<sup>31</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press: 46

<sup>32</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press: 46

<sup>33</sup> Mary Elizabeth King, "The significance of defections in Syria," *Waging Nonviolence People-Powered News and Analysis* (blog), August 20, 2012, <http://wagingnonviolence.org/2012/08/the-significance-of-defections-in-syria/> (accessed September 12, 2012).

successful democratic revolutions in the Philippines, Russia, and Serbia, explains that the disloyalty that ultimately leads up to defection does not simultaneously occur throughout the military. Instead, “disloyalty of the military to the regime, which is necessary for democratic revolutionaries to be successful, must manifest itself suddenly and surprisingly at the moment the regime seeks to employ it to crush the democratic opposition.”<sup>34</sup> This change of heart occurs when “the regime orders the violent suppression of its democratic opposition”, which in turn spurs action within the military as “one or more key units defect to the rebels declaring they will fight to protect them.” In response to this defection, “others declare their ‘neutrality.’—i.e., their unwillingness to fight their fellow soldiers.”<sup>35</sup> Both of these actions fall under my definition of defection and serve to undermine morale in the regime’s military as loyal soldiers realize they may not be able to count on their fellow soldiers.

Dr. Stephen Zunes, a professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of San Francisco and chair of the university’s Middle Eastern Studies Program also focuses his work on strategic nonviolent action. His article, “Recognizing the Power of Nonviolent Action”, analyzes the role of nonviolent action during revolutions. He separates his article into three sections: why nonviolence works, nonviolent movements against U.S.-backed governments, and nonviolent movements against governments opposed by the United States. In each section he briefly references the influence of nonviolent action in multiple revolutions. Regarding military defections he states, “unarmed movements increase the likelihood of defections and noncooperation by unmotivated police and military personnel.”<sup>36</sup> Zunes explains that it is the “the moral power of nonviolence” that is able to sway the perceptions and the support of the

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<sup>34</sup> Mark N Katz, “Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail,” Aug. 29-31, 2003:1-12.

<sup>35</sup> Mark N Katz, “Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail,” Aug. 29-31, 2003:1-12.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Zunes, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, “Recognizing the Power of Nonviolent Action,” Last modified March 30, 2005, Accessed November 4, 2012

military. While this particle article does not go as in-depth as an academic journal since it was intended for a general audience, Zunes' work is still highly credible. His articles on the Arab Spring Movement are primarily rooted in his widely acknowledged expertise on nonviolence, which is based on an extensive case-study literature that is beyond my current scope of interest. In another one of Zune's articles titled, "Arab revolutions and the power of nonviolent action" Zunes further supports his claim that people power through the use of nonviolence is the most successful tactic in revolutions. He backs this argument by stating, "Even if a government has a monopoly of military force and the support of the world's one remaining superpower it is still ultimately powerless if the people refuse to recognize its authority."<sup>37</sup> Zunes uses a variety of evidence to demonstrate the successfulness of nonviolence including the examination of previously successful movements in the Middle East, a 2005 study by the Freedom House titled "How Freedom Is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy", and Chenoweth and Stephan's book *Why Civil Resistance Works*. While Zunes specifically addresses the Arab Spring in his article, I will contribute to this research by taking a more in depth look at the situations in Egypt, Libya, and Syria in regards to how nonviolence has influenced defections by military personnel.

As previously stated, Nepstad examines numerous variables in her article examining the Arab Spring. While I have already discussed her analysis of ethnic divisions, another focus of her work is the effect of armed opposition. She proposes that "in nonviolent revolutionary struggles, when military defectors take up armed struggle against the state, the nonviolent aspect of the struggle will dissipate and the nation will likely slide into civil war."<sup>38</sup> In regards to this

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<sup>37</sup> Stephan Zunes, "Arab revolutions and the power of nonviolent action," *National Catholic Reporter* 48, no. 3 (November 25, 2011): 26. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost

<sup>38</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: The Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances," *Swiss Political Science Review*, 17. no. 4 (2011): 488.

variable her case study of choice is the 2011 movement in Libya. However, Nepstad also suggests that the ongoing situation in Syria would likely turn into a civil war. Since this article was published the situation in Syria has devolved from a primarily nonviolent movement into a civil war. While the nonviolent movement in Syria persists, the violence has greatly overshadowed it. This evidence thus suggests that Nepstad's hypothesis concerning military defectors who take up arms against the regime has some merit. In her book, *Nonviolent Revolutions*, Nepstad examines nonviolent movements against socialist regimes, military regimes, and personal dictators by using China, East Germany, Panama, Chile, Kenya, and the Philippines as case studies. In this book Nepstad adds that violence by the general population decreases the likelihood of defection as soldiers "fear retaliation at the hands of a hostile crowd."<sup>39</sup>

Zunes reiterates Nepstad's argument adding that, "armed revolts legitimize the role of the government's coercive apparatus, enhancing its self-perception as the protector of society."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, military defections, especially those in the form of large scale defections, are less likely to occur when the government faces an armed rebellion because repression is then seen as justifiable. I will specifically examine the ongoing situation in Syria as Assad's regime has brutally cracked down on the Free Syrian Army and both sides have resorted to violence. I will also examine the situations in Syria and Libya to see if this hypothesis can be further generalized. In addition this project will inspect how armed rebellion was averted in Egypt.

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<sup>39</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad. *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Zunes, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, "Recognizing the Power of Nonviolent Action," Last modified March 30, 2005, Accessed November 4, 2012

## *The Revolutions and Their Buildups: A Brief Look at Case Studies*

This section will take a closer look at the conditions that led up to each of the revolutions. In addition, the general events of the revolutions will be examined as well as how events in Egypt and Libya were resolved and where the civil war in Syria stands today. After the general information on each of my case studies has been presented, I will explore how each hypothesis relates to each case study in the following section.

### **Egypt**

#### *General Background on Mubarak's Regime*

Hosni Mubarak, prior to taking over the office of the president served as the Vice President of Egypt as well as a commander in the Egyptian Air Force. He succeeded Anwar Al-Sadat as president in 1981 after Sadat's assassination by Egyptian Islamist extremists.<sup>41</sup> Mubarak was reelected to five terms as president, serving almost thirty years in Egypt's executive office. However, the legitimacy of these presidential elections had been greatly contested over the years. Even after Mubarak's announcement in 2005 that "henceforth Egypt's presidential elections would be multi-party, with other candidates allowed to run for the office", his opponents were described as being only "token opposition".<sup>42</sup> Claims that there was "limited access to polling places, stuffed ballot boxes, voter intimidation and the pre-election arrest of some 800 Muslim Brotherhood members" during the 2005 presidential election furthered this belief that Mubarak's reelections had been fixed over the years.<sup>43</sup> This apparent political

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<sup>41</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Egypt.

<sup>42</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Egypt: 50.

<sup>43</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Egypt: 51.

corruption resulted in some discontent within the nation; however, more factors would have to come into play before large scale action was taken by the people of Egypt.

In addition to allegations of fixed elections, Mubarak's regime also had a long history of repression before the 2011 revolution. Mostly in response to Islamic fundamentalists such the umbrella organization al-Gamaa al-Islamiya who wished to build an Egyptian state based on the laws of Islam, the regime declared that the death penalty may be imposed for "antistate terrorism".<sup>44</sup> During Mubarak's rule the regime also frequently declared extended states of emergency. It was during these periods that human rights were routinely ignored as indefinite detentions without charges were relatively common practice and suspects were often tortured. To gain information, the government at times also engaged in the mistreatment of suspects' relatives. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press were also greatly constricted under Mubarak's regime. One example of this was a law passed in 1995 which gave the government the authority to fine and potentially jail journalists for publishing articles considered "harmful to the state."<sup>45</sup>

In regards to civil-military relations both before and even after the revolution in Egypt, academic Derek Lutterbeck explained that the Egyptian armed forces "can be described as a professional and largely meritocratic force."<sup>46</sup> According to opinion polls, it is the Egyptian armed forces that are considered to be the most respectable official institution in the nation and the one most committed to pursuing objectives that are aligned with the national interest. However, the military during Mubarak's rule has also played a dominant role in both the political

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<sup>44</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill , 2009), chap. Egypt: 51.

<sup>45</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill , 2009), chap. Egypt: 51.

<sup>46</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 9.

and economic spheres of the nation, thus increasing the armed forces' loyalty to the regime. Despite previous attempts by the regime to "limit the political influence of the army and to refocus it more strongly on its purely military tasks" the armed forces maintained strong connections with the regime politically up until the uprising.<sup>47</sup> Regardless of these attempts to constrict their power and influence, the military was, and continues to be, considered the "key pillar within the Egyptian political system".<sup>48</sup> The relationship between military and regime is likely this strong since all Egyptian presidents from the overthrow of the monarchy through Mubarak had previously served as members of the armed forces.

### *The Egyptian Revolution*

January 25, 2011 officially marked the start of Egypt's revolution as it was the first day of mass protests throughout urban areas, particularly Cairo.<sup>49</sup> January 25<sup>th</sup> was selected for its specific significance because it has traditionally been heralded as Police Day. This holiday, which was supposed to celebrate the role of the Egyptian police, had also been ridiculed by other Egyptian movements in the past, particularly the April 6<sup>th</sup> Youth Movement as many saw the state police as being exceedingly corrupt.<sup>50</sup> Having studied previous movements such as Serbia's youth movement Otpor!, the April 6<sup>th</sup> Movement was well versed in how to utilize nonviolent tactics and can be attributed with encouraging the Egyptian Revolution to remain nonviolent.<sup>51</sup> These initial protests of 2011 were also partially inspired by the successful Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia which had started only weeks earlier and resulted in Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fleeing the country. The people of Egypt were motivated to protest particularly

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<sup>47</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 9.

<sup>48</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 9.

<sup>49</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh," *Foreign Affairs*. 90. no. 3 (2011): 26-32.

<sup>50</sup> PBS: Frontline, "Revolution in Cairo: Inside the April 6 Youth Movement," Accessed December 30, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> PBS: Frontline, "Revolution in Cairo: Inside the April 6 Youth Movement," Accessed December 30, 2012.

in response to the regime's "deteriorating ability to provide basic services and seeming indifference to widespread unemployment and poverty" as well as the government's widespread corruption.<sup>52</sup> The size and momentum of the movement only increased after January 25<sup>th</sup>, with activists from the Coalition of January 25 Youth presenting a series of demands of Mubarak's regime including "the resignation of Mubarak, the lifting of the state of emergency, the release of all political prisoners, the dissolution of parliament, the appointment of a government of independent technocrats, the drafting of a new constitution, and the punishment of those responsible for violence against the protestors."<sup>53</sup>

On February 11<sup>th</sup> after eighteen days of mass protest, the Egyptian Revolution came to a conclusion. The military elite realizing that "tying their future to a crippled regime might in the end destroy their reputation and undermine their ability to maintain their position of privilege" pressured Mubarak to abdicate the office of president.<sup>54</sup> Mubarak realizing he was facing international condemnation and had lost favor with both the people of Egypt and the military as resigned as president of Egypt. This resignation served to effectively hand over executive powers to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.<sup>55</sup> With this speedy transition Egypt became heralded as the greatest success story of the Arab Spring Movement, as this overwhelmingly nonviolent movement was not only effective and efficient but also thoroughly covered by the Western media.

It is also important to note at this time that while unrest in Egypt has become prevalent from time to time since Mubarak's ousting, this project serves to solely focus on the period of

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<sup>52</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012): 2-7.

<sup>53</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012). 2-7.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Wahid Hanna, "Will Egypt's Military Officers Free the Revolution?," *The Atlantic*, , sec. Global, January 29, 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 1-25.



January 25, 2011 when major protests began up until Mubarak's resignation on February 11, 2011. Strains in civil-military and regime-military relationships since then are currently outside my scope of focus.

## Libya

### *General Background on Gaddafi's Rule*

In September of 1969 a military coup consisting of young army officers led by Captain Muammar Gaddafi disposed of Libyan King Idris. This coup would become known as the Free Officers Movement.<sup>56</sup> Gaddafi then took over as leader of Libya, transforming the government from that of a monarchy to a single party state or, as it has officially been labeled, "a *Jamahiriya* meaning "state belonging to the people".<sup>57</sup> This tumultuous change would signify the start of Gaddafi's thirty two year rule as the leader of Libya.

Libya's civil-military relations during Gaddafi's rule were rather unique in comparison to those in Syria and Egypt. Leading up to the country's 2011 collapse into civil war there was a distinct "lack of institutionalization and the level of patrimonialism and politicization of the security apparatus was arguably nowhere higher than in Libya."<sup>58</sup> This lack of institutionalism in the armed forces was similar to Gaddafi's organization of other state institutions. As well as lacking centralization, Gaddafi made sure state sponsored organizations were loyal to him by appointing those he trusted to positions of authority. This was evident as "the country's most important security forces [were] based primarily on tribal and family ties to Gaddafi himself."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, *Libya*, (Kessinger Publishing, 2004) <http://countrystudies.us/libya/> (accessed December 3, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Libya: 123.

<sup>58</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 1-25.

<sup>59</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 12.

The armed forces were also divided into multiple groups. The first consisted of the traditional army whose job was to secure Libya from external threats and the second consisted of a wide variety of agencies whose primary mission was to protect the regime and the ideology behind it. These measures and fragmentation of the Libyan military were ordered by Gaddafi “in his effort to prevent the emergence of any alternative political power base capable of challenging his regime”.<sup>60</sup>

### *The Libyan Civil War*

While the Arab Spring Movement began in the Middle East and Northern Africa as a primarily peaceful and internally focused movement, Libya would largely change this perception. Although the Libyan revolution began on February 15, 2011 with nonviolent protest activity, the movement would devolve into a violent campaign only four days later.<sup>61</sup> In comparison to the movement in Egypt, which remained overwhelmingly nonviolent, Libya’s movement would “soon become an all-out succession—or multiple separate secessions—from a failed state.”<sup>62</sup> According to Anderson, this difference between the situations in Egypt and Libya was primarily due to what the country lacked, including, “no system of political alliances, network of economic associations, or national organizations of any kind.”<sup>63</sup> However, Libya’s people were united in their daily struggles and grievances with the government. Most of Libya’s general population had finally become fed up with “years of artificially induced scarcity in everything from simple consumer goods to basic medical care” as well as widespread corruption

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<sup>60</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 1-25.

<sup>61</sup> Erica Chenoweth, Waging Nonviolence: People-Powered News & Analysis, "Did the Libyan uprising have to be violent?," Last modified August 21, 2011, <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/did-the-libyan-uprising-have-to-be-violent/>.

<sup>62</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring,” *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring,” *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012).

in the regime and Gaddafi's consolidation of power based primarily on clan and kinship.<sup>64</sup> This favoritism likely led to an increase in factions between Libya's troops.

According to interviews with Libyan soldiers who were captured by rebel forces during the conflict, Gaddafi's army and militias were "undermined by self-serving officers, strained logistics and units hastily reinforced with untrained cadets".<sup>65</sup> Several also talked about how they were originally unaware that they were fighting against their fellow Libyans. Instead one captured soldier described how his officers had insisted that they were working to "put down a foreign-inspired jihad."<sup>66</sup> For those who chose to oppose the regime's orders outright, the consequences were often severe. One report by the Associated Press claims that "Rebels, after overrunning government strongholds in the east, described finding government soldiers bound and shot through the head apparently for disobeying orders."<sup>67</sup> In the same article a former Libyan army officer stated that "Some of our colleagues just couldn't handle it anymore and turned their weapons on themselves" in order to escape the massacre.<sup>68</sup>

On March 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 after almost a month of fighting, the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC) in Benghazi proclaimed itself as Libya's sole representative. However, it was not until October 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 that Muammar Gaddafi was captured and killed by NTC fighters in his hometown of Sirte. Three days later an NTC official announced the liberation of the nation stating, "'We declare to the whole world that we have liberated our beloved country, with its

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<sup>64</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012).

<sup>65</sup> C.J. Chivers, "Captive Soldiers Tell of Discord in Libyan Army," New York Times, May 14, 2011. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/866383030?accountid=14070>

<sup>66</sup> C.J. Chivers, "Captive Soldiers Tell of Discord in Libyan Army," New York Times, May 14, 2011. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/866383030?accountid=14070>

<sup>67</sup> Bouazza Ben Bousazza, Associated Press, "Libyan officers defecting to Libya describe mutinous army and climate of fear," Last modified June 26, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Bouazza Ben Bousazza, Associated Press, "Libyan officers defecting to Libya describe mutinous army and climate of fear," Last modified June 26, 2011.

cities, villages, hill-tops, mountains, deserts and skies,"<sup>69</sup> By October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 Abdul Raheem al-Keeb was elected as the new interim prime minister of Libya.

## Syria

### *General Background on Assad's Regime*

Bashar al-Assad was elected unopposed as the president of Syria in 2000. He succeeded his father Hafez al-Assad who served as Syria's president for nearly three decades up until his death. Bashar al-Assad followed his father's footsteps by becoming president and by taking over the roles of leader of the armed forces and the Ba'ath Regional Command; the Ba'ath being Syria's primary political party. The Syrian Constitution also grants the president the ability to decide and execute policies and the right to appoint all government officials. The Syrian executive office also enjoys unlimited emergency powers. Overall, Bashar al-Assad's policies, up until the rebellion, have been considered to be more moderate than those of his father.<sup>70</sup>

### *The Syrian Conflict*

The unrest in Syria, much like the conflicts in Egypt and Libya, primarily stemmed from high unemployment rates, poor living standards, and decades of emergency rule which restricted citizen's political freedoms and frequently resulted in human rights abuses.<sup>71</sup> Like Libya, Syria's revolution began quite peacefully; however, the revolution has since turned into a drawn out bloody struggle as both the Assad regime and the opposition have resorted to large scale violence. According to Jon Lee Anderson in his article "The War Within", it was "only after the police shot at demonstrators and tortured to death a group of adolescent protesters, returning

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<sup>69</sup> "Timeline: Libya's civil war Key moments in the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime and the transition to the new government." *The Guardian*, November 19, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/19/timeline-libya-civil-war> (accessed April 11, 2013).

<sup>70</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Syria: 169-176.

<sup>71</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: The Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances," *Swiss Political Science Review*. 17. no. 4 (2011): 487.

their bodies to their families gouged with knives and, in at least one case, castrated” that the opposition turned violent against the regime.<sup>72</sup> These adolescent protestors, which consisted of a group of schoolboys ranging from ten to fifteen in age, had been detained on March 6, 2011 for spray painting “As Shaab Yor-eed Eskaat el nizam” which had been a slogan of the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.<sup>73</sup> Translated to English this phrase means “The people want to topple the regime!”<sup>74</sup> The demonstrators whom the police shot at, killing at least four, had been members of the boys’ families as well as local clerics who were protesting the boys’ inhumane detainment and treatment. Violence since the movement’s outbreak has only continued to escalate with a report from BBC on April 21, 2013 placing the death toll at “at least 70,000 people”.<sup>75</sup>

Syria has aptly been described as “one of the most coup-prone states on earth” mostly due to its history surrounding these ethnic tensions.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, in order to ensure stability within the regime, both of the Assads implemented and continue to implement ethnic preference strategies within the country’s government and its armed forces. As explained by McLauchlin during his analysis of the loyalty strategies present in Syria only a year before the conflict began, this strategy is threefold in how it works,

First and most obvious, most of the senior command of the military was Alawi, such that by the time of Asad’s death, over 90 percent of general-rank officers were Alawis. Second, however, Sunnis were still well represented in the rank and file. This corresponds to some concessions by Asad to Sunnis, such as their prominence within parts of the Ba’th party and bureaucratic hierarchy. Third, however, the crucial ethnic strategy for regime maintenance was the creation of elite regime-defending units peopled strongly by Alawis.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Jon Lee Anderson, “The War Within,” *New Yorker*. 88. no. 25 (2012): 48-57.

<sup>73</sup> Jackson Diehl, “Lines in the Sand Assad Plays the Sectarian Card,” *World Affairs*, May/June. (2012): 7-15.

<sup>74</sup> Jackson Diehl, “Lines in the Sand Assad Plays the Sectarian Card,” *World Affairs*, May/June. (2012): 7-15.

<sup>75</sup> BBC News: Middle East, “Syria army seizes Jdiadet al-Fadl ‘killing dozens’.” Last modified April 21, 2013. Accessed April 21, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22240540>.

<sup>76</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, “Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion,” *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 341.

<sup>77</sup> Theodore McLauchlin, “Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion,” *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 2010): 333-350. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012)

While this division is very apparent in Syria today, its roots go much further back, primarily stemming from the period after WWI during which Syria and its government were under the heavy influence of France. According to Fildis in his examination of the “Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria”, “the French administration consciously neglected to train an efficient and dedicated elite and quietly aggravated relations between the Sunni Arab majority and minorities.”<sup>78</sup> This was done in order to constrain the Syrian independence movement and Arab nationalism.

While defection during the Arab Spring Movement has been most notable in Syria due to its high frequency and occurrence across the ranks, there have also been more nontraditional types of defection which have further crippled the regime. As *The New York Times* reported in July of 2012, “President Assad’s bigger military challenge is the swelling number of silent objectors—soldiers of all ranks lacking the means to flee, or the interest, but no longer cooperating with the government. Instead of responding to the call to duty, they are staying home, abandoning their posts”.<sup>79</sup> With the chaos of the conflict and nontraditional types of defection, it is presently impossible to determine just how widespread defections are in Syria. Despite the prevalence of defection in Syria and the United States Department of State stating that Syria’s military is growing weak, independent military analysts warn that Assad’s military is “still capable of handling the threats that they’re dealing with, and they’ve been reaching deeper and deeper and deeper into their armory”.<sup>80</sup>

One similarity the ongoing situation in Syria shares with the 2011 civil war in Libya is soldiers’ reports that the government and their commanding officers have misled them in regards

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<sup>78</sup> AyseTekda Fildis, "Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria," *Middle East Policy*, 19, no. 2 (2012): 149.

<sup>79</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, “Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad,” *New York Times*, Jul 07, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

<sup>80</sup> David Enders, "Military analysts say Syrian Army is far from point of collapse," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 07, 2012., N.PAG, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 18, 2013).

to the true aim of their mission. To keep soldiers committed Assad's regime has informed them that they are fighting foreign sponsored terrorism and not their fellow Syrians. According to Nepstad, the government's claim that the opposition is composed of terrorists is much more believable to the troops if the opposition forces use violence.<sup>81</sup> In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, a 21 year old ex-Syrian army intelligence officer turned defector reported that "TVs were removed and his commanders told him and his colleagues they were fighting against terrorists aligned with the U.S. and Israel who were plotting to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad."<sup>82</sup> When he returned home and realized it wasn't terrorists he was fighting, but rather his fellow countrymen, he left the service. However, in this case, the soldier abstained from joining the rebel forces.

The conflict's extended duration has also proved problematic for the opposition, as the amount of soldiers defecting has greatly diminished and there has been fear that those who wish to defect have already done so. In an October 2012 *New York Times* article it was reported that opposition commanders have even "resorted to more desperate measures: cajoling, duping, threatening and even drugging and kidnapping military men to get them to change sides, or at least stay out of the fight."<sup>83</sup> Not only has the significant duration of the uprising taken a toll on the opposition's ability to recruit defectors, but Assad's change of strategy has also posed a challenge to the opposition. By focusing on attacks from a distance through artillery and air strikes, the regime has been able to distance their remaining forces from interacting with the rebels and the public who could spur loyal soldiers to defect. Joseph Holiday, a researcher at the

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<sup>81</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: The Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances," *Swiss Political Science Review*. 17. no. 4 (2011): 490.

<sup>82</sup> Maria Abi-Habib, "World News: Defector's Recount Tales of Conflict; 'Blood on My Hands'—Some Soldiers Leave Assad's Forces, Regretting Civilian Deaths, Though Reprisals Against Families Discourage Mass Desertion." *Wall Street Journal*, Apr 18, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100189005?accountid=14070>.

<sup>83</sup> Kareem Fahim and Hwaïda Saad, "Cajoling, Drugging, and More as Rebels Try to Draw Defectors," *The New York Times*, October 03, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/04/world/middleeast/syria-rebels-press-harder-to-gain-more-fighters.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/04/world/middleeast/syria-rebels-press-harder-to-gain-more-fighters.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

Institute for the Study of War in Washington and specialist on the Syrian conflict, also points out that Assad has used the strategy “of teaming units made up of conscripts with more professional, better trained troops.”<sup>84</sup> In turn the opposition has also changed strategies as it has begun to acknowledge that violence is undermining popular support for their side. They have made this shift by blaming the government for staging more extreme attacks, although the opposition also continues to utilize violence.<sup>85</sup>

While my case studies have demonstrated that the military elites are primarily motivated by the side that is able to ensure their power status, they appear to be somewhat concerned with the morality of the conflict as well. Lt. General Abdulaziz al-Shala, who has been one of the highest ranking defectors in the Syrian conflict so far, stated that he withdrew his support for the regime as “the army failed to protect Syrians”.<sup>86</sup> In a video statement released by Abdulaziz he further explained that his defection was due to the military’s “deviation from its fundamental mission to protect the nation and transformation into gangs of murder and destruction.”<sup>87</sup> This statement reiterates that defection in Syria has occurred across ranks with different incentives and that these incentives do not always fit under my three independent variables or align with my original hypotheses. Soldiers have also taken varying stances on the conflict in Syria upon defecting as some have joined the opposition while others have been silent objectors that refuse to carry out regime orders.

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<sup>84</sup> David Enders, "Military analysts say Syrian Army is far from point of collapse," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 07, 2012., N.PAG, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 18, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Kareem Fahim and Hwaida Saad, "Cajoling, Drugging, and More as Rebels Try to Draw Defectors," *The New York Times*, October 03, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/04/world/middleeast/syria-rebels-press-harder-to-gain-more-fighters.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/04/world/middleeast/syria-rebels-press-harder-to-gain-more-fighters.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>86</sup> BBC News: Middle East, "Syria crisis: Military police chief al-Shalal defects," Last modified December 26, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20843341>.

<sup>87</sup> BBC News: Middle East, "Syria crisis: Military police chief al-Shalal defects," Last modified December 26, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20843341>.



## *Analysis of Major Findings*

This section explores relevant case study information as it correlates with each of my three hypotheses. After each hypothesis is explained by case study I will present my major findings. I will particularly address whether or not my case studies lived up to my original expectations or if not, expand to explain why this might be so.

*H<sup>1</sup> - Military personnel are more likely to defect if the opposition force is of the same ethnic or religious makeup as them and if the majority of the high ranking officials within the government come from a different ethnic or religious group.*

### Egypt- The Role of Ethnic and Religious Divisions

Ethnically Egypt, during Mubarak's rule, consisted of approximately 99% Eastern Hamitic (Egyptian, Bedouin, Arab, and Nubian) and 1% other.<sup>88</sup> As previously explored in regards to Mubarak's difficulty with Islamic fundamentalism, the only real major split culturally in Egypt stemmed from its religious divide. According to *Global Studies: The Middle East*, Egypt at this time was approximately 94% Muslim (mostly Sunni) and 6% Coptic Christian and others.<sup>89</sup> These religious minorities often found themselves as targets of extremist attacks particularly during the 1990s as they were particularly vulnerable. Although these extremist groups chose to specifically target religious minorities, they also targeted tourists, suggesting that these extremists' motives may be less driven by the religious divide and more by their desire to gain attention in the region. These attacks also greatly subsided as Egypt put stricter security measures into operation to contain this violence by extremists.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill , 2009), chap. Egypt: 43.

<sup>89</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill , 2009), chap. Egypt: 43.

<sup>90</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill , 2009), chap. Egypt: 50.

Despite previous significant conflict within the country over Islamic fundamentalism during Mubarak's rule, ethnic and religious differences in the country did not seem to present a major obstacle during the revolution. Based on a lack of citation in interviews with soldiers and newspaper articles, religious and ethnic differences did not appear to have any significant influence over the decision of individuals in the military to defect, nor the ultimate decision of the generals to persuade Mubarak to hand power to a council comprised of military elite. Instead most sources have determined that the Egyptian military elite acted primarily on power and economic incentives. As Anderson reported in her article "Demystifying the Arab Spring", "as it [the Egyptian Armed Forces] assumed control of Egypt after Mubarak's downfall, the army revealed its enormous influence in Egyptian society."<sup>91</sup> While Mubarak's regime had rewarded the military elites handsomely "with growing economic involvement in everything from housewares and military-gear production to farming and tourism" and proceeds from these sectors going "straight to the military's coffers and is disbursed without state oversight", the military elites felt their overall status was threatened and "rising violence would only hurt the military's legitimacy and influence."<sup>92</sup> Therefore, it was better to sever ties with Mubarak's regime and ensure the military's future of influencing Egyptian society.

Instead of religion acting as a divisive factor in the revolution, the iconic image of Christians protecting Muslim protestors during prayer and Muslims protecting Christians celebrating Mass in Tahrir Square Cairo seemed to set the tone for protests. As Reverend Ihab al-Kharat informed the protestors in a sermon he gave in Tahrir Square during the midst of the conflict, "We will keep protesting until the fall of the tyranny" and "In the name of Jesus and

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<sup>91</sup> Lisa Anderson. "Demystifying the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012): 4

<sup>92</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military." *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011): 24-35, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 28

Muhammed, we unify our ranks.”<sup>93</sup> However, despite this portrayal of a religiously unified movement, there were significant misgivings from both the people of Egypt and the international community about the previously banned Muslim Brotherhood. While the group ended up not being a major deciding factor during the revolution, there was initial concern as to whether or not their presence would hinder the protests and fragment the support for the movement. There was also apprehension in regards to the role the Muslim Brotherhood may play politically in the new government upon Mubarak’s removal from power.

## Libya- The Role of Ethnic and Religious Divisions

According to William J. Spencer’s “The Middle East”, Libya ethnically consists of 97% Berber and Arab, and 3% other. Religiously the nation is divided into 97% Sunni Muslims, and 3% other.<sup>94</sup> Most of the division within the nation comes from its widespread and historically engrained clan system based on region, kinship, and tribe. According to Anderson, “every national institution, including the military, is divided by the cleavages of kinship and region.”<sup>95</sup> American scholar and historian Juan Cole also pointed out in his blog post on the “Revolutionary Situation in Libya” that it was largely through “cultivating tribal loyalties” that Gaddafi remained in power as long as he did.<sup>96</sup> For example, when the Libyan tribes of Warfala and Tuareg announced their defection and decision to support the opposition they brought 1.5million

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<sup>93</sup> Helen Kennedy, "Muslims return favor, join hands with Christian protesters for Mass in Cairo's Tahrir Square." *Daily News*, sec. World, February 07, 2011. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/muslims-return-favor-join-hands-christian-protesters-mass-cairo-tahrir-square-article-1.137961> (accessed April 4, 2013).

<sup>94</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Libya: 122.

<sup>95</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring,” *Foreign Affairs* 90. No. 3 (May 2011):2-7, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 30, 2012).

<sup>96</sup> Juan Cole, "Revolutionary Situation in Libya," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

of their extended kin with them.<sup>97</sup> However, it is uncertain how many of these 1.5 million Libyans were members of the Libyan armed forces and if they also participated in this loyalty shift.

## Syria- The Role of Ethnic and Religious Divisions

Leading up to the Syrian conflict the country's ethnic makeup was approximately 90% Arab, 9.7% Kurds, and 2.3% Armenian and other Christians. Religious differences combined with ethnic tensions have also had significant implications on how the regime is structured as, "Syrian political instability stems from the division of the population into separate ethnic and religious groups".<sup>98</sup> While 75% of the nation is Sunni Muslim, 16% are Alawite, Druze and other Muslim sects, and the remaining 10% Christian and Jewish, it continues to be the Alawite minority that controls most positions of authority in the government including not only the office of the president, but also many of the elite positions in the armed forces, police, and intelligence services.

Despite countless accounts by reliable sources stating the role of secularism as a large part of the Syrian revolution now turned civil war, this supposed fact was dismissed in a CNN interview with Syrian Colonel Abdalhamid Zakaria. Colonel Zakaria is a doctor and defector of the Syrian army who has now chosen to fight on the side of the Free Syrian Army. Zakaria claimed that reports about secular division in Syria "were encouraged, if not created by the Assad Regime" and that "Assad always tried to convince the world that we have a sectarian

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<sup>97</sup> Juan Cole, "Revolutionary Situation in Libya," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

<sup>98</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Syria: 169-176.

war.”<sup>99</sup> According to the former Colonel, this deception by President Assad has been in attempt to convince Syrians and the international community that he is the only one who can keep these religious sects safe. While this interview with Colonel Zakaria casts some doubt over the extent that the secular division in Syria has played in shaping Syria’s revolution and whether or not it has divided the military, his statement does not eliminate the fact there is a significant religious divide in Syria that has historically been at the root of Syrian unrest. With so much other information supporting the idea that the religious divide has played a major role particularly in determining the loyalty of the armed forces, I feel it would be unwise to completely disregard its possible implications based on the report of one individual. For example, a report on the *Waging Nonviolence* blog by nonviolence scholar and professor of peace and conflict studies Mary Elizabeth King contradicts Zakaria by highlighting the fact that most defectors have been Sunni Muslims whereas most of the Alawite minority has remained loyal to the Assad regime.<sup>100</sup> In addition, according to a *New York Times* article, “of the 80,000 young men expected to show up for their mandatory military service this year—most of them Sunnis—experts said that virtually none have responded.”<sup>101</sup> As a former Syrian colonel who defected to Syria stated, “the distrust between the Sunnis and Alawites in the military has grown so deep that at night, when Sunnis are put on guard duty at key installations, there are always Alawite guards assigned to watch the Sunni soldiers.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Abdalhamid Zakaria, interview by Lucky Gold, "Syrian military defector: 'Those who were injected are lucky,'" *CNN*, July 02, 2012, <http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2012/07/02/syrian-military-defector-those-who-were-injected-are-lucky/>

<sup>100</sup> Mary Elizabeth King, "The significance of defections in Syria," *Waging Nonviolence People-Powered News and Analysis* (blog), August 20, 2012. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/2012/08/the-significance-of-defections-in-syria/> (accessed September 12, 2012).

<sup>101</sup> Neil MacFarquhar. "Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad." *New York Times*, Jul 07, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

<sup>102</sup> Neil MacFarquhar. "Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad." *New York Times*, Jul 07, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

As already highlighted by numerous sources, the ethnic divide in Syria is further amplified in the ranks of the military. While many of the common soldiers are Sunni Muslims, those of higher ranks tend to be Alawite. This had led to a divide similar to that which was seen during the Egyptian revolution, in which the actions of soldiers do not always reflect the opinions of the command. Since the Alawites are the minority and may face persecution should Assad's regime topple, "the elite units, special forces and intelligence agencies may have little choice but to rally around the Asad regime, given their bleak prospects in a post-Asad Syria."<sup>103</sup> Therefore, this greater loyalty demonstrated by the Alawite minority in the armed forces may be driven more by fear than shared ideology as "many remain convinced that a spirit of revenge may guide the opposition which has been so badly abused" and they may face persecution if the Sunni majority comes to power.<sup>104</sup> However, ethnic connections cannot determine the outcome of the movement alone. As argued by the Christian Science Monitor, "without a firm commitment to civil disobedience, the largely Sunni protestors may not be able to gain the support of Syria's minorities, its merchants, or even the Sunni soldiers in the Army."<sup>105</sup>

## Analysis of Major Findings

This hypothesis appears to have some significance especially during the examination of my case study of Syria. Those soldiers who are Sunni, and therefore of a different ethnic group than President Assad, show an increased likelihood of defecting in comparison to their Alawite counterparts. From a purely qualitative standpoint using previously published interviews on defectors I cannot say how much this increase in defection comes from the soldier's ability to

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<sup>103</sup> Joshua Landis, "The Syrian Uprising of 2011: Why the Asad Regime is Likely to Survive to 2013," *Middle East Policy*. 19. no. 1 (2012): 74.

<sup>104</sup> Joshua Landis, "The Syrian Uprising of 2011: Why the Asad Regime is Likely to Survive to 2013," *Middle East Policy*. 19. no. 1 (2012): 74.

<sup>105</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, "Syria protests must stick to nonviolence," February 29, 2012.  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2012/0229/Syria-protests-must-stick-to-nonviolence>

better identify with the general population in comparison to the regime through their ethnic makeup or to what extent it could be attributed to their lower position in the military as they face a lower power incentive to remain loyal to the regime than the military elite.<sup>106</sup>

However, Egypt, which previously experienced clashes between Muslims and Coptic Christians, appeared to have no significant divisions within the military due to religious or ethnic differences and no defections were cited as being driven by these differences. This is possibly due to the revolution's brevity as religious tensions in Egypt increased significantly after Mubarak's resignation with the controversial reemergence of the Muslim Brotherhood as a key player in Egyptian politics. As Libya is relatively homogenous in regards to religion and ethnicity, this variable did not come into play during the conflict as either a divisive factor to the movement or as a cause of military defections. However, the role of clans and kinship in the region should be further addressed as it has the potential to correlate to this hypothesis.

*H<sup>2</sup>: Military personnel are more likely to defect if the international community promises direct military intervention in opposition to the current regime.*

## Egypt- The Role of International Intervention

Despite Egypt's history of repressing the political freedoms of its people under President Mubarak, Egypt still found favor with the West. According to a recent Congressional Research service report cited by NBC Politics, "Between 1948 and 2011, the United States provided Egypt with \$71.6 billion in bilateral foreign aid, including \$1.3 billion a year in military aid from 1987 to the present. Since 1979, Egypt has been the second-largest recipient, after Israel, of U.S. bilateral foreign assistance."<sup>107</sup> This aid has helped ensure that Egypt would not act aggressively

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<sup>106</sup> Joshua Landis, "The Syrian Uprising of 2011: Why the Asad Regime is Likely to Survive to 2013," *Middle East Policy*. 19. no. 1 (2012): 74.

<sup>107</sup> Tom Curry, "US aid seems secure despite Egyptian Turmoil," NBC Politics, [http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2013/01/30/16773231-us-aid-seems-secure-despite-egyptian-turmoil?lite](http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/01/30/16773231-us-aid-seems-secure-despite-egyptian-turmoil?lite).

towards Israel and would abide by their 1979 peace agreement. Mubarak also took steps during his time in office to strengthen Egyptian relations with the Arab world. This was done by Egypt's return to the Islamic Conference, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Arab League in addition to other Arab organizations located and operated in the region.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, while there had been significant internal unrest under Mubarak, Egypt's standing in the international community was fairly stable.

On February 1, 2011, President Obama commended the Egyptian military for "the professionalism and patriotism that it has shown thus far in allowing peaceful protests while protecting the Egyptian people"<sup>109</sup> While this statement by Obama acknowledged of the legitimacy of the protests by the international community, the United States did not publically offer assistance to the Egyptians until the revolution's conclusion. Then United States' aid was offered to help manage the aftermath of the revolution. This served as a signal to the Egyptian military that while the United States routinely provides their armed forces with aid, they would remain largely uninvolved in this matter. At most the United States threatened the end of military aid and cooperation if the crackdowns were to become too violent or if American weapons were used.<sup>110</sup> Like the United States, most other nations called for the situation to remain nonviolent with many expressing support for the Egyptian people with the exception of Saudi Arabia as King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz argued that the Egyptian people "have tried to destabilize the

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<sup>108</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Egypt: 49.

<sup>109</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks on the Situation in Egypt," Speech given at the White House, Washington, D.C., Feb 01, 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Truthout, "Credit the Egyptian People for the Egyptian Revolution," Last modified February 26, 2011. Accessed November 4, 2012. <http://truth-out.org/news/item/27:credit-the-egyptian-people-for-the-egyptian-revolution>.



security and stability of Egypt.”<sup>111</sup> From the research I have done, no direct international military intervention occurred on behalf of the opposition or the regime.

## Libya- The Role of International Intervention

In regards to Libya’s relations with the international community, the nation has long been on the United States’ list as a main sponsor of international terrorism. Strained relations with the United States go back to the 1969 revolution which first put Gaddafi in power. However, the United States did resume full diplomatic relations with Libya on May 31, 2006, the first time since 1980. Relations remained stable until February 2011 when the United States suspended Embassy operations in Tripoli.<sup>112</sup> Libya had also sporadically found itself subject to UN sanctions during Gaddafi’s rule. Gaddafi’s unsuccessful foreign policy along with significant economic downturns bred discontent within the nation. During this time Libya also struggled to unite with other Arab states in the region; however, according to Spencer, “other North African heads of state have continued to work with him on the basis that it is safer to have Gaddafi inside the circle than isolated outside.”<sup>113</sup> While relations between the West and Libya have often been strained, the country’s lucrative oil industry has continued to facilitate Libya’s interactions with the West.

According to Juan Cole’s article “Revolutionary Situation in Libya” the division of Libya’s military forces occurred in February prior to the international intervention by NATO.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> CNN, "الامند سيدين" ويد دي ن م بارك ي دعم "ال سعودي ال عالي" [Saudi King Shows His Support for Mubarak, Condemns 'the Infiltrators']. Last modified January 29, 2011. Accessed April 21, 2013. [http://arabic.cnn.com/2011/egypt.2011/1/29/arab.egypt\\_rex/index.html](http://arabic.cnn.com/2011/egypt.2011/1/29/arab.egypt_rex/index.html)

<sup>112</sup> United States Department of State: Office of the Historian, "A GUIDE TO THE UNITED STATES' HISTORY OF RECOGNITION, DIPLOMATIC, AND CONSULAR RELATIONS, BY COUNTRY, SINCE 1776: LIBYA." Accessed April 21, 2013. <http://history.state.gov/countries/libya>.

<sup>113</sup> William J. Spencer, *Global Studies: The Middle East, Twelfth Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), chap. Libya: 126-129.

<sup>114</sup> Juan Cole, "Revolutionary Situation in Libya," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

Cole, whose article was published on February 21, 2011, describes the Libyan military in Benghazi as having already split into two forces with one joining the crowd of nonviolent protestors before the two sides engaged each other in hostilities. He also discusses the defection of major tribes and “the development of two distinct camps with authority in the same country.”<sup>115</sup> Despite this major split, it was not until March 17, 2011, approximately one month after active resistance to the government first appeared on a significant scale, that the UN Security Council approved a mandate allowing international forces to use “all necessary measures” to protect civilians.<sup>116</sup> As Dadler and Stavridis describe in their article “NATO’s Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention”, “the initial intervention rescued the people of Benghazi, obliterated Libya’s air defense system within 72 hours, and deployed aircraft and naval vessels to enforce the UN resolution.”<sup>117</sup> While the intervention was primarily led by the United States as President Obama took over the command of the operation, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, Greece, Norway, the United Arab Emigrants, Sweden, Turkey, Qatar, and Romania all partook in the efforts to police the arms embargo, patrol the established no-fly zone, and protect Libyan civilians.<sup>118</sup>

One factor that particularly sets Libya apart from other nations involved in the Arab Spring movement was this decision by the international community to directly intervene as well as the motives and strategies behind the intervention. The French, British and Americans used the concept of “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) or “Opportunity to Intervene”, more formally

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<sup>115</sup> Juan Cole, "Revolutionary Situation in Libya," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

<sup>116</sup> Ivo H. Dadler and James G. Stavridis, “NATO’s Victory in Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 91 no. 2 (March 2012: 2-7. *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (accessed December 30, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> Ivo H. Dadler and James G. Stavridis, “NATO’s Victory in Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 91 no. 2 (March 2012: 2-7. *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (accessed December 30, 2012).

<sup>118</sup> Ivo H. Dadler and James G. Stavridis, “NATO’s Victory in Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 91 no. 2 (March 2012: 2-7. *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (accessed December 30, 2012).

known as UN Resolution 1973, which authorizes the use of “all necessary means to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas” to carry out “preemptive aerial attacks” to bring down the Gaddafi regime.<sup>119</sup> While partially done in the name of democracy and protecting freedom, this intervention was also likely driven by other factors particularly oil. As renowned American scholar and modern Middle East historian Juan Cole pointed out, “Libya is an oil state that exports 1.7 million barrels a day, its fate has more immediate implications for the international community than unrest in non-oil states such as Tunisia.”<sup>120</sup> Despite this powerful response from the international community, I found no evidence to suggest that the intervention by NATO resulted in an increase in defections by military personnel.

## Syria- The Role of International Intervention

Despite similarities between the civil wars in Libya and Syria there are also plenty of differences between the two. Unlike Libya, Syrians were rather adamant about keeping the international community from intervening at the beginning of the revolution. However, since then this sentiment has somewhat faltered as civilians have realized that toppling Assad would take time and come at a heavy price. According to *New York Times* writer Neil MacFarquhar, this wariness largely stems from Syria’s perception of the American intervention in Iraq and the disbanding of the Iraqi military.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, “many officers, wary of the possible foreign military intervention someday, choose to stay because they want to help prevent in Syria what happened in Iraq.”<sup>122</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by UN diplomat Kofi Annan as he

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<sup>119</sup>Husam Dughman, "Why Syria's Revolution is not like Libya's," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), August 16, 2012. <http://www.juancole.com/2012/08/why-syrias-revolution-is-not-like-libyas-dughman.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

<sup>120</sup>Juan Cole, "Revolutionary Situation in Libya," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

<sup>121</sup> Neil MacFarquhar. “Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad.” *New York Times*, Jul 07, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

<sup>122</sup> Neil MacFarquhar. “Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad.” *New York Times*, Jul 07,

cautioned against international intervention in Syria because armed foreign interventions have had mixed results in the past. Annan went on to make an indirect reference to Iraq when he stated, “We don’t have to go very far in the region to find an example of what I’m talking about.”<sup>123</sup>

When comparing the situation in Syria to Libya it is important to note that while the Libyan intervention was largely led by the United States, it was sanctioned by the United Nations and was carried with significant international support by fourteen NATO member nations and four partners unlike Iraq.<sup>124</sup> However, at this point it appears that a large scale direct intervention, particularly by the West, in Syria is rather unlikely. China and Russia have also adamantly opposed any type of direct intervention by the United Nations. Therefore a unified international effort is currently not on the table.<sup>125</sup> Despite their inaction, the international community has strongly warned the regime that it will not sit idle if Assad chooses to use chemical warfare upon his own people at any point. However, the Syrian government denies that it has access to such chemical weapons. Having never been a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian government has not had to publically declare that it possesses chemical weapons.<sup>126</sup>

Although large scale intervention has been ruled out at the moment for Syria, especially by a united international community force, other countries have interfered to varying degrees. In October 2012 Turkey and Syria exchanged fire and the aircrafts of both countries became banned

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2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

<sup>123</sup> Matt Bradley and Nour Malas, “World News: Outside Force would do More Harm, Envoy warns, as a Minister Defects,” *Wall Street Journal*, Mar 09, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/926865420?accountid=14070/>.

<sup>124</sup> Ivo H. Dadlader and James G. Stavridis, “NATO’s Victory in Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 91 no. 2 (March 2012: 2-7). *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (accessed December 30, 2012).

<sup>125</sup> Husam Dughman, “Why Syria's Revolution is not like Libya's,” *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), August 16, 2012. <http://www.juancole.com/2012/08/why-syrias-revolution-is-not-like-libyas-dughman.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

<sup>126</sup> Jonathan Marcus, “Fears grow for fate of Syria's chemical weapons,” *BBC News: Middle East*, December 05, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18483788> (accessed December 30, 2012).

from each other's airspaces. Israel also engaged in the conflict in January 2013 by firing missiles from aircrafts at a Syrian military research center. Tensions were further increased as Iran has declared that an attack on Syrian by Israel will be seen as an attack by Israel on Iran. However, despite a firm stance by the international community on having no unified military intervention, the United States, Britain, Turkey, and Gulf States have at this time officially declared that the legitimate representative of the Syrian people is now Syria's opposition National Coalition.<sup>127</sup>

Since it has become evident that the international community is conflicted over the situation in Syria and is unlikely to intervene in mass, it is unlikely that this slim possibility of a direct military intervention will have any influence on soldiers' decisions to defect at this time. I also did not find any evidence of the original possibility of international intervention resulted in an increase in military defections. Instead, many were wary of this possible intervention and choose to continue to back Assad's regime.<sup>128</sup>

## Analysis of Major Findings

Direct international intervention in opposition to the current seems to have little promise in regards to positively impacting a soldier's decision to defect. Currently, there is little prior literature on the influence of international intervention on the likelihood of defection and little exploration of this variable in regards to my case studies. In the case of Egypt this factor was simply absent as the international community generally did not respond to the situation in any manner of significance until after its conclusion and direct intervention did not occur.

In regards to Libya, while NATO did intervene and largely shaped the outcome of the movement, the majority of soldier defections, as depicted by the resources available at this time,

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<sup>127</sup> BBC News: Middle East, "Syria Profile." Last modified January 2013. Accessed February 3, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14703995>.

<sup>128</sup> Neil MacFarquhar. "Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad." New York Times, Jul 07, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

occurred prior to the actual promise of international intervention. In Syria, the threat of international intervention even went as far as to influence soldiers to continue to fight for a regime whose policies they disagreed with. According to the interviews with Syrian defectors and civilians, they continued to support Assad or were more hesitant in defecting simply because they viewed the regime as the lesser of two evils in comparison to having another country intervene.<sup>129</sup>

One difficulty that arose when analyzing this variable was what has actually comprised as international intervention in these cases. In each case study it was not the same entity that was doing the intervening or threatening to intervene and what interventions that have occurred have been done using different methods to varying degrees. For example, NATO was the intervening force in Egypt and their main aims were to aid Libyans residing in Benghazi, defeat Libya's air defense system, and enforce the UN resolution.<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, there was no direct intervention by the international community in Egypt. In comparison Syria's case has been much more complex. While the international community has not had a unified response to the situation, multiple other countries such as Israel, Turkey, and Lebanon have exchanged hostilities with Assad's regime. Therefore, the reactions of the armed forces cannot be measured against a consistent international actor that has acted as an intervening force. In conclusion, not only does this hypothesis show little promise of holding true in the manner in which it is currently formatted, it would also be unwise to suggest the hypothesis is able to be generalized.

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<sup>129</sup> Neil MacFarquhar. "Defections Add New Pressures Against Assad." New York Times, Jul 07, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1023881318?accountid=14070>.

<sup>130</sup> Ivo H Dadlader, and James G. Stavridis, "NATO's Victory in Libya," *Foreign Affairs* 91 no. 2 (March 2012: 2-7. *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (accessed December 30, 2012).

*H<sup>3</sup>- Military personnel are more likely to defect if the regime orders them to fire upon or in any other way violently crackdown on unarmed civilians and conversely, military personnel are less likely to defect if the opposition is armed and violent.*

## Egypt- The Role of Violent Crackdowns and Armed Opposition

The nonviolent movement in Egypt was skillfully planned using traditional and modern tactics to encourage mass mobilization with numbers reaching up to 15 million. According to academic Emad El-Din Shahin, “the predominantly nonviolent strategy that the protesters adopted accentuated the regime’s brutal repressive measures and fostered domestic and international support for the revolution.”<sup>131</sup> Protestors were also urged “to adopt the ‘hug a soldier’ strategy.”<sup>132</sup> This “hug a soldier” strategy was “a way of saying that the struggle is against the dictatorship not rank and file soldiers” and was done to assure soldiers that protestors were not there to attack them, but rather wished to collaborate to build a brighter future for Egypt.<sup>133</sup> While the movement lacked a central figure, this did not hinder its effectiveness. Instead, this lack of a figurehead may have made the movement more inclusive and better able to gather large numbers for protests and mass demonstrations such as the iconic protests in Tahrir Square. The nonviolent movement was able to do this by uniting Egyptians of diverse backgrounds, through maintaining an unwritten policy of tolerance, acceptance, and pluralism which reached across all social classes.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Emad El-Din Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution: The Power of Mass Mobilization and the Spirit of Tahrir Square," *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 3, no. 1 (2012): 46-69,

<sup>132</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, The New York Times, "Protest's Old Guard Falls In Behind the Young," Last modified January 30, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/world/middleeast/31opposition.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/world/middleeast/31opposition.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>133</sup> David Cortright, David Cortright: Peace Scholar, Teacher, Activist, "'Hug a Soldier' in Egypt and Beyond." Last modified February 1, 2011.

<sup>134</sup> Emad El-Din Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution: The Power of Mass Mobilization and the Spirit of Tahrir Square," *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 3, no. 1 (2012): 46-69,

The response of the Egyptian armed forces to the people's uprising must be broken into two categories as military personnel from different ranks faced different loyalty incentives. First, there must be an analysis of the actions of lower ranking military officials. Following that, the actions of Egypt's military generals will be examined. The average soldier during the Egyptian Revolution appears to have been more sympathetic towards their fellow countrymen's cause, than the generals whose actions were more of calculated strategy. Soldiers in the square also had direct contact with the protestors which humanized them. As Shahin described, "protestors greeted the military with flowers, hugs, and slogans, chanting with enthusiasm: 'The military and the people are one hand!'"<sup>135</sup> According to one reporter during the early days of the revolution, "it was unclear whether the soldiers in the streets were operating without orders or in defiance of them. But their displays of support for the protestors were conspicuous throughout the capital."<sup>136</sup>

Protestors in turn welcomed the military presence in the streets, preferring it over that of the police.<sup>137</sup> They encouraged members of the armed forces to join them in their fight to remove Mubarak from power and many individuals did just that. According to Dina Shehata, military elites recognized this faltering loyalty as, "Egypt's conscript army has so many ties to society at large that, even had the generals been willing to shoot demonstrators, many officers and enlisted men probably would have refused to obey such an order."<sup>138</sup> The solidarity that soldiers felt with the opposition movement was largely in part to soldiers being "disproportionally from the poor

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<sup>135</sup> Emad El-Din Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution: The Power of Mass Mobilization and the Spirit of Tahrir Square," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*. 3. no. 1 (2012): 67

<sup>136</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Egyptian's Defiant as Military Does Little to Quash Protests," *The New York Times*, , sec. A1, January 30, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh," *Foreign Affairs*. 90. no. 3 (2011): 26-32.

<sup>138</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011): 24-35. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 28-29.



and disenfranchised sectors of society”.<sup>139</sup> Thus they could more easily identify with the protestors and their dissatisfaction with the regime than the elites in the military.

The elites or generals in the military in comparison to most lower ranking military personnel bided their time during the rebellion. They chose to completely abandon Mubarak’s regime only after determining that the people of the revolution were the likely victors and if they remained supportive of the regime they would ultimately suffer, losing influence and power. After Mubarak’s first attempts of concession and repression through the use of state police forces horribly failed to regain control, the generals concluded that “rising violence and disorder would only hurt the military’s legitimacy and influence.”<sup>140</sup> As previously examined, the military had economic incentive to back Mubarak’s regime as their officers “directly profit from the army’s business endeavors through relatively high salaries plus preferential treatment in medical care, housing and transport.”<sup>141</sup> However, these incentives were simply not enough in the end. For one, Egypt’s generals had extreme contempt for Gamal Mubarak, the son and likely successor of the President. In addition they also were displeased by the increasing transfer of power and privileges from the military to the state police. These factors would ultimately cost Mubarak his most important pillar of support.

It was on January 30<sup>th</sup>, only five days after mass protests in Cairo began, that the military made their first public move in the form of a statement on Mena, Egypt’s state –run news agency. This announcement declared that, “The presence of the army in the streets is for your sake and to ensure your safety and wellbeing. The armed forces will not resort to the use of force

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<sup>139</sup> Truthout, "Credit the Egyptian People for the Egyptian Revolution," Last modified February 26, 2011, Accessed November 4, 2012. <http://truth-out.org/news/item/27:credit-the-egyptian-people-for-the-egyptian-revolution>.

<sup>140</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011): 24-35. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 28.

<sup>141</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011): 24-35. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 28.

against our great people.”<sup>142</sup> At the time the motive of this announcement was somewhat unclear. Egyptians and the international community were unsure as to whether it was done in attempts to pacify the protestors, or if it was the first sign of the overall weakening of military support for Mubarak. Although this declaration did not help Mubarak retain effective control, the military did not take an active opposed position to the regime or one that favored the protestors; instead, this proclamation by the Egyptian military to refrain from force remained one of calculated neutrality.

## Libya- The Role of Violent Crackdowns and Armed Opposition

In early February 2011, Juan Cole reported that tens of thousands held a rally in Benghazi. When the regime attempted to violently suppress these protestors, killing dozens, some dissent arose within the military. While several military units joined the protestors in solidarity, others remained loyal to the regime. These now opposing forces began firing at one another. This disconnect within the army signaled that Gaddafi’s military pillar of support was starting to crumble as Gaddafi’s supporters began fighting against a rebel force led by Libyan military defectors.<sup>143</sup> As Mohamed Bouzana described, “This military division was obvious since the early days of the Libyan uprising, when many of the military commanders abandoned their uniforms and walked away from what they described as a dictatorship, while others stayed to defend the remnants of Gaddafi’s regime.”<sup>144</sup> However, this divide in the loyalty of the armed forces can also be explained by examining its power structure. As described by Lutterbeck in his analysis of civil-military relations during the Arab Spring, “the loyalty of the elite units most

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<sup>142</sup> Ian Black, Jack Shenker, and Chris McGreal, "Egypt set for mass protest as army rules out force," *The Guardian*, January 31, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/31/egyptian-army-pledges-no-force>.

<sup>143</sup> Juan Cole, "Revolutionary Situation in Libya," *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012)

<sup>144</sup> Mohamed Bouzana Zawaya, "Libyan army split: More victims, and looming division," [http://zawaya.magharebia.com/en\\_GB/zawaya/opinion/400](http://zawaya.magharebia.com/en_GB/zawaya/opinion/400).

closely linked to Qaddafi's regime was unwavering to the very end, and they responded without restraint to the uprisings."<sup>145</sup>

## Syria- The Role of Violent Crackdowns and Armed Opposition

Despite the situation in Syria becoming increasingly violent, there have been signs that the nonviolent movement has persisted as well. At times the nonviolent movement has even worked in connection with the armed opposition. While the Free Syrian Army (FSA) often openly engages in violence against the regime, and this portion of the uprising is typically most highlighted by the media, they have also served as protectors to the nonviolent movement. When possible, the FSA has maintained presence at demonstrations to protect the people from Assad's army and snipers although this has been more difficult as the conflict in Syria has become increasingly violent in nature. As a report from early 2012 highlights, this "presence of the FSA at protest sites has re-energized protesters, who are coming out in increasing numbers even as the regime escalates its violence against them".<sup>146</sup>

There has been a downside to the FSA's armed defense of nonviolent protestors as connections have been made between the pacifism used by revolutionary groups committed to nonviolence and military defectors resorting to violence when they attempt to aid the movement's cause. As Syrian activist Abu Ghazi explained, "The revolt became militarised because the army was so violent against peaceful protesters that soldiers and officers, moved by their conscience, started to defect."<sup>147</sup> However, it is important to note that while military

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<sup>145</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* (2012): 14.

<sup>146</sup>Rafif Jouejati, "Syrian civil resistance continues amidst armed conflict," *Waging Nonviolence People-Powered News and Analysis* (blog), February 3, 2012. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/2012/02/syrian-civil-resistance-continues-amidst-armed-conflict/> (accessed September 12, 2012).

<sup>147</sup>Serene Assir, "Activists struggle to be heard amid roar of Syria violence," *The Daily Star: Lebanon*, October 30, 2012. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Oct-30/193205-activists-struggle-to-be-heard-amid-roar-of-syria-violence.ashx>.

defectors who brought their weapons with them militarized the opposition force, not all defectors have joined the FSA. Ghazi's sentiment was reaffirmed by an article in the Christian Science Monitor which took a similar stance declaring that the regime's orders of brutal crackdowns on peaceful protests "may only drive more soldiers to defy their superiors."<sup>148</sup> Another article by the Christian Science Monitor reiterates this idea by stating Assad's "violent crackdown on cities like Homs and Hama is designed to force the people to take up arms, which in turn allows him to warn Syrian minorities to stick with him and endorse his iron fist", thus legitimizing the use of violence by the regime.<sup>149</sup>

Regardless of if they had intended to join the opposition or not, some soldiers who have defected and been caught by the regime have faced bleak fates. In some instances, the government has made an example of these defectors by ordering public executions.<sup>150</sup> Regardless of the risks, many have continued to defect on moral grounds as they object to violently suppressing their fellow countrymen. As Brig. Gen. Mohammed Hassoun stated he defected because, "I thought the army was built for the purpose of fighting foreign enemies, not targeting our own civilians".<sup>151</sup> Hassoun's sentiment has been reiterated by countless defectors from across the ranks of the Syrian military.

## Analysis of Major Findings

First of all, it can be concluded that nonviolent resistance was a tactic utilized in each of my case studies although to varying degrees and levels of success. As discussed by Ramin

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<sup>148</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, "Syria may be next for revolution - in the hearts of soldiers," Last modified June 13, 2011. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2011/0613/Syria-may-be-next-for-revolution-in-the-hearts-of-soldiers>.

<sup>149</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, "Syria protests must stick to nonviolence," February 29, 2012. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2012/0229/Syria-protests-must-stick-to-nonviolence>.

<sup>150</sup> Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: The Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances," *Swiss Political Science Review*. 17. no. 4 (2011): 487.

<sup>151</sup> Carol Morello, "For one Syrian officer, a months-long wait for the chance to defect to Turkey," *The Washington Post*, sec. Middle East, January 12, 2013. [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01-12/world/36312432\\_1\\_aleppo-free-syrian-army-fsa-fighters](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01-12/world/36312432_1_aleppo-free-syrian-army-fsa-fighters) (accessed April 20, 2013)

Jahanbegloo in his article “Reading Gandhi in Cairo”, “many nonviolent Muslim activists and thinkers have played a role in opposing and checking the levels of violence both within their own communities and against others”.<sup>152</sup> This suggests “the practical success of an ethical commitment to norms of transparency, negotiation, compromise and mutual respect.”<sup>153</sup> While the movements in Libya and Syria may not have remained nonviolent on a large scale, there is still evidence that each of these movements began with nonviolent intentions and utilized traditional nonviolent tactics such as mass demonstrations.

From the research I have done regarding the factors influencing defections within the armed forces, a regime’s crackdown on unarmed civilians appears to be the most compelling one of my three original hypotheses as it is the variable that soldiers have most often cited as their reason for abandoning the regime. While the state police was willing to use violence against nonviolent protestors in Egypt, the military was firm in declaring, even after Mubarak’s regime ordered it to fire upon civilians, that they would not resort to violence against the people.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, while the military did not actively assist the revolutionaries, they defected through their refusal to support the regime. In regards to Syria, there was also a significant portion of the interviews with defectors that explicitly highlight the regime ordering violent crackdowns against unarmed civilians as the primary reason for their defection. This hypothesis also appears to have validity outside the scope of my case studies as Zunes describes, “From the Philippines to East Germany, autocratic rulers facing nonviolent civil insurrections ordered their troops to fire on unarmed crowds, only to have the troops refuse.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Reading Gandhi in Cairo," *NPQ: New Perspectives Quarterly*, 28, no. 2 (2011): 59-61.

<sup>153</sup> Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Reading Gandhi in Cairo," *NPQ: New Perspectives Quarterly*, 28, no. 2 (2011): 59-61.

<sup>154</sup> Ian Black, Jack Shenker, and Chris McGreal, "Egypt set for mass protest as army rules out force," *The Guardian*, January 31, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/31/egyptian-army-pledges-no-force>.

<sup>155</sup> Stephen Zunes, "What about Gadhafi?" *Sojourners Magazine* 40, no 5 (2011): 22-23.

The second portion of hypothesis H<sup>3</sup>, regarding the influence of an armed opposition on lessening military personnel's decisions to defect, appears to have considerable weight as well. According to Chenoweth, President Mubarak also believed there was merit in this theory and "took such great pains to use armed thugs to try to provoke the Egyptian demonstrators into using violence, after which he could have rallied the military behind him."<sup>156</sup> In Libya, since the opposition became armed soon after the revolution began it is somewhat difficult to conclude how things may have been different had the revolutionaries and defectors remained nonviolent. Syria however, like Egypt, also highlights the concern of the nonviolent movement in that they rightly feared that if the movement resorted to violence it would not only decrease the likelihood of more soldiers defecting, but also harm the legitimacy of the movement since the movement would lose its "superior moral character."<sup>157</sup> If support from the military or at minimum their failure to act in order ensure the survival of a regime is necessary as this project stated at the beginning, and a movement's commitment to nonviolence is more likely to lead to its success then using transitive logic, nonviolence is more likely to lead to an increase in defections by military personnel. Conversely, violence by the opposition is more likely to decrease the likelihood of defections.

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<sup>156</sup> Erica Chenoweth, "Give Peaceful Resistance a Chance," New York Times, Mar 10, 2011.

<sup>157</sup> Chibli Mallat, "The Philosophy of the Middle East Revolution, Take One: Nonviolence," *Middle East Law and Governance*, 3, no. 1 (2011): 136-147.

## *Conclusion*

This project has sought to explain the factors that have influenced and continue to influence soldiers to defect during the Arab Spring Movement in the conflicts of Egypt, Libya, and Syria with a varying degree of success. Originally I proposed three hypotheses regarding the likelihood of military defection which correlated with three specific independent variables: the threat of international intervention, a regime's orders for the military to partake in a violent crackdown against unarmed civilians and armed opposition, the impact of differences in religious or ethnic identity between the regime, its soldiers, and the general population and the opposition. When I started out this project I believed that the threat of international intervention, and differences in the ethnic or religious makeup of the military and the regime would correlate with higher rates of defection. On the other hand, I thought that armed opposition would have a negative impact when a soldier weighed his/her reasons to defect. However, these original assumptions do not all appear to have held true across when examining all three of my case studies.

In regards to the role of religious or ethnic divisions on the loyalty of the military this project did not come to one clear conclusion. While Egypt and Syria had previously experienced religious and ethnic clashes prior to their respective revolutions, Muslims and Christians were able to unite in Egypt during their collective effort to overthrow Mubarak. However, should the revolution have lasted longer, this division could have potentially played a greater role. This is somewhat likely since the religious division in Egypt has caused considerable tension during the aftermath of the revolution, particularly during elections and the rewriting of Egypt's constitution. However, if focusing only on Egypt's period of revolution, ethnic and religious divisions played no noticeable role in coaxing military personnel to defect or in other soldiers'

choice to remain supportive of Mubarak. In Syria, on the other hand, the ethnic and religious divides were highlighted almost to the extreme by the media community as one of the leading catalysts of the revolution. This divide was also associated with leading to an increase in military defections as Sunnis were portrayed as being less loyal to Assad's primarily Alawite regime and more likely to defect and, in many cases, join the opposition. In Libya the ethnic and religious makeup of the nation was too homogeneous to play a major role in the revolution. Therefore, this hypothesis holds up for Syria, but had no impact in a religiously diverse Egypt and religiously and ethnically homogeneous Libya. In conclusion, hypothesis one was not overly applicable in the situation in Libya, but showed there was some correlation in religiously or ethnically polarized nations such as Egypt and Syria.

In regards to the regime resorting to violence against nonviolent protestors this hypothesis, previously examined by Chenoweth and Stephan, that states soldiers are less likely to remain loyal to a regime that violently suppresses its unarmed civilians, holds true in all three of my case studies. My analysis of the conflicts in Egypt, Libya, and Syria as well as the role of military personnel during these periods of major unrest clearly demonstrates the reluctance of soldiers to violently suppress civilians, especially when civilians oppose the government using nonviolent tactics. Not only were soldiers less likely to obey regime's orders to fire upon their countrymen, but they were also more likely to defect and take up the opposition's cause. However, in some cases, primarily Syria, this led to the partial militarization of the nonviolent movement as many of the defecting soldiers brought their weapons with them.

Conversely, when the opposition is armed, as it became in Syria particularly in the form of the FSA and it was during most of the revolution in Libya, defections are significantly less likely to occur. This is because the regime is able to legitimize their use of force in their struggle



to maintain power. In this type of scenario it becomes less of the regime versus the people and more the regime versus an armed threat. In the case of Egypt this variable was not significant as violence carried out by the military forces was somewhat minimal even as regime backed thugs and the state police forces violently suppressed demonstrators.

On the other hand, I greatly overestimated that the international community would have a positive role in influencing defections. My original perception of the impact of international intervention was perhaps too US-centric with too much faith in the international community's ability and intent to alter the outcome for the best of the people. In Egypt, the revolution was carried out solely by its own civilians and, while the international community kept a keen eye on the situation, no direct action was taken on behalf of Mubarak's regime or the opposition.

Although I knew Egypt as a case study lacked this particular variable I originally thought that international intervention or just the increased attention of international community would have more sway in causing defection in Libya and Syria. However, while international intervention, primarily direct military intervention by NATO, played a significant role in determining the outcome of Libya's revolution and eventual civil war, it appeared to have little weight on a soldier's decision to abandon Gaddafi's regime. Instead, the vast majority of the split from Gaddafi's forces appears to have occurred early on in the fighting prior to NATO's direct involvement or any major discussion on the part of the international community to partake in large scale interference. In Syria, international intervention has if anything proved to negatively impact one's decision on whether or not to defect. First of all, international intervention in the form of military aid has practically been blocked through Russia and China's ability to veto the call for UN action; thus, it was evident that the Syrian opposition would not be getting boots on the ground assistance from this forum. Therefore, without further in depth interviews with

soldiers it is uncertain of how realistic they viewed the possibility of international intervention to be from this international organization. Some accounts also showed the possibility of foreign intervention was viewed with hostility by the some military personnel, even those who chose to defect, simply because they associated foreign intervention with the American led war in Iraq.

Despite my hypotheses inability to hold strong across the board, I am still pleased with my research as research is meant to do more than to prove a researcher's original instincts infallible. Instead these flaws exposed by my research have further showed what more needs to be done to adequately address this question in the field of revolutionary studies. These potential steps will further be addressed in the next and final section- Where to Go From Here.

### *Where to Go From Here...*

While a significant start to exploring the factors that influence military personnel to defect during revolutions, this project merely scrapes the surface of this phenomenon. To adequately explore this event more information needs to be gathered and analyzed to put the exploration of this question up to par with the other focuses of research that already exist regarding the study of revolutions. It would also be beneficial to examine revolutions outside the scope of the Arab Spring for greater comparison. While I am still pleased with my decision to focus on recent revolutions, I believe it would be greatly beneficial to go back and even reexamine these events, and particularly the military defections that defined them, several years from now as things settle down in the region. While it is unlikely there will be a substantial amount of information published regarding soldiers' decisions to defect years after the regime changes are carried out as this has not been the case with prior literature on older revolutions, there is a greater likelihood that one would be able to gather more information through primary sources such as direct interviews with defectors instead of having to rely so heavily on other secondary sources. This would be greatly beneficial as it is unlikely as well that any specific statistics on military defections will publically be reported at any point. As the region finds greater stability it should make it easier for academics to travel to the area and more likely for individuals to be willing to speak up about their decisions as the threat posed to themselves and their families should dwindle with time. As the conflict in Syria looks appears that it is drawing closer to an end and that all the original regimes focused on in this study are to be ousted, it is more likely that defectors will be willing to speak up in the near future.

While the three original independent variables I focused on were present in numerous defectors' accounts of what led them to defect, I knew these three variables were unlikely to

address all of the reasons behind each soldier's decision to defect. I also greatly underestimated just how many other independent variables there would be weighing in to these decisions as well as their overall significance. In addition, I had the tendency to overestimate similarities between case studies. For one, ethnic and religious make up had little influence on soldiers' decisions to defect in Libya; however, their clan identity played a significant role. For example, when the Warfala tribe announced it was siding with the opposition instead of Gaddafi's regime the tribe spoke for the million Libyans that belong to this extensive kinship group. The Arab Warfala leaders were also able to convince the Bebers of the southern Tuareg tribe to oppose Gaddafi thus supporting the opposition with another 500,000 Libyans.<sup>158</sup> These kinship and clan connections had significantly greater impact on the situation in Libya than expected because my knowledge on clan and kin ties was minimal when I began this project. As previously discussed, another overlooked yet very significant factor that influenced whether or not a soldier would defect was his/her ability to not only ensure his/her survival, but also the survival of his/her family.

Another example of a variable that could be examined using this research design would be the ability of a soldier to ensure the safety of their family. In the words of one former Syrian intelligence officer who was interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*, "All I could think about was that I had to leave the army...But I had to secure my family first."<sup>159</sup> While I originally overlooked this variable mostly due to its simplicity when presenting my original three variables, it proves to be extremely significant in a soldier's decision to defect. In the research I examined,

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<sup>158</sup> Juan Cole. "Revolutionary Situation in Libya." *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (blog), February 21, 2011, <http://www.juancole.com/2011/02/revolutionary-situation-in-libya.html> (accessed November 4, 2012),

<sup>159</sup> Maria Abi-Habib, "World News: Defector's Recount Tales of Conflict; 'Blood on My Hands'—Some Soldiers Leave Assad's Forces, Regretting Civilian Deaths, Though Reprisals Against Families Discourage Mass Desertion." *Wall Street Journal*, Apr 18, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100189005?accountid=14070>.

the ability of a soldier to protect their family was cited second only to one's abhorrence for the regime's orders to violently suppress nonviolent protestors in countless accounts of soldiers' explanations of their actions and motives for defection. This especially held true in Libya and Syria where soldiers who had chosen to defect have met with violent consequences from the regime; therefore, sending a message to their counterparts. Conversely, many of the soldiers who morally sided with the opposition were still unwilling or reluctant to join them based on their inability to ensure not only the safety of themselves and their families if they were to try to leave the regime's service. However, one Syria soldier also stated that "Now I'm no longer fighting and left Syria, the pressure on my family is less".<sup>160</sup>

Yet another factor to consider in greater depth would be the professionalism of each country's armed forces. For example, Egypt's military is a very traditional and professional entity. Officers are well trained and the military is well funded. As previously examined, Egypt's armed forces are also well respected by the Egyptian people. According to Lutterbeck, the Egyptian armed forces "can be described as a professional and largely meritocratic force."<sup>161</sup> A recent opinion poll also found that Egyptians believe that their armed forces are the most respectable official institution in the nation and the one most committed to pursuing objectives that are aligned with the national interest. On the other hand, Gaddafi's forces were largely organized in a decentralized manner with most of the military elites having either blood or clan connections to Gaddafi. Gaddafi's military was also "divided into numerous organizations that had little contact with one another."<sup>162</sup> Instead the regular military was primarily in charge of

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<sup>160</sup> Maria Abi-Habib. "World News: Defector's Recount Tales of Conflict; 'Blood on My Hands'—Some Soldiers Leave Assad's Forces, Regretting Civilian Deaths, Though Reprisals Against Families Discourage Mass Desertion." *Wall Street Journal*, Apr 18, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100189005?accountid=14070>.

<sup>161</sup> Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2012): 9.

<sup>162</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011): 24-35, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 29

ensuring Libya's security against external threats and the country's security force responsible for the survival of the regime. Barany also describes Gaddafi as having "deliberately neglect the military and gave priority treatment to parallel elite and paramilitary forces, most of the newly established and commanded by his relatives."<sup>163</sup> According to the Christian Science Monitor, the Syrian armed forces are well organized as it has a "highly mechanized army – built to fight the Israeli army"<sup>164</sup> However, while some of the military consists of professionals, many of Syria's soldiers are males conscripted into service at the age of eighteen for a compensatory 18 months.<sup>165</sup> By examining the professionalism of a country's armed forces, the likelihood of defection as well as the type of defection-.i.e. if a soldier would join an armed opposition group or flee the country, would be easier to determine. This further insight would allow for a better analysis of the difference in defection motives between the ranks of individuals as well.

Another way to expand this research and increase its validity would be to compare it to other case studies outside of the Arab Spring Movement. This could be done in order to establish whether or not the factors that influenced soldiers to defect in Egypt, Libya, and Syria were unique to these movements, or if these results could be generalized to other movements that have occurred across the globe in modern history. This expansion on my scope of focus would greatly increase the worth of what research was done here although the existing research could still serve as a foundation. It would also be interesting to see if the incentives that have persuaded soldiers to defect have changed over the course of time at all.

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<sup>163</sup>Zoltan Barany, "The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (October 2011): 24-35, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 13, 2012): 30

<sup>164</sup> David Enders, "Military analysts say Syrian Army is far from point of collapse." *Christian Science Monitor*, September 07, 2012, N.PAG, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 18, 2013).

<sup>165</sup> CIA, "The World Fact Book: Middle East: Syria." Last modified April 2013. Accessed April 20, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>.

Lastly, while my work has focused primarily on sources such as newspaper articles and interviews that have described individuals' decisions to defect in a manner which has often lacked real depth or traceability, it would be extremely beneficial to add a quantitative side to all of this information as well. This way more soldiers could be interviewed or surveyed and a ranking system could be established to gauge what factors had the greatest weight in their decision to defect. For example, while the order of violence against civilians by the regime was evident in positively influencing soldiers to defect in all of my cases studies, it might have played a lesser role in Syria than perhaps the religious and ethnic divide did. Interviewees could also have the opportunity to present other reasons for their defections than those originally listed. Through the use of a bigger sample, the choices of soldiers to defect in relation to their ranking in the military could also be explored more in depth. This is helpful as a difference has already been established between the choices of the military elites and the average foot soldier, but the middle ranks have remained virtually unexplored as a subcategory. This could also better establish if there is any correlation between what influenced a soldier to defect and what type of defection he/she partook in, whether it was fleeing the country, refusing to carry out orders, or becoming part of the opposition in addition to why they chose this type of defection. Like more in depth qualitative analysis, quantitative information of these particular cases is unlikely to be obtained at this time and therefore quantitative analysis is not currently a possibility for all three of these case studies.

Therefore, while my research has added to the limited field of study focused on defections during rebellion, there is still much more to be done. This section has just provided a few ideas as to where research could be further expanded. There are plenty more variables, case studies, time periods, and approaches to consider when asking what factors influence military

defections during periods of rebellion. Hopefully the research done within these pages at least adds to the discussion and starts to answer this multifaceted question.



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## *Appendix*

### *Stories of Defection*

To give further insight into the minds of defectors below are three interviews with defectors from Egypt, Libya, and Syria from *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *Aljazeera* respectively.

#### Major Defection - Egypt<sup>166</sup>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2011/nov/25/egyptian-military-defector-army-video>

A Film By Guardian News & Media

Distributed By Journeyman Pictures

November 2011

“Speaking from a window overlooking the chaos in Tahrir square, Major Tamer Samir Badr, an army defector, claims that many Egyptian army officers have been secretly attending the protests in civilian clothes.

Looking out over the turmoil in the square below, Major Badr explains how he came to defect from the Egyptian military. "I saw people dying and the army gave the orders for us to just stand and watch". After that, "I couldn't take it any longer", he says. He now feels it is his duty to protect, "these people who are fighting for our rights". This candid interview, coupled with startling images of the current clashes, gets right to the heart of Egypt's latest upsurge.”

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<sup>166</sup> “Major Defection- Egypt.” (November 28, 2011). Video clip. YouTube. [\*www.youtube.com\*](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MH5AvhUPRag)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MH5AvhUPRag>

## ‘Scores defect’ from Gaddafi's army- Partial Article<sup>167</sup>

Eight high-ranking officers and 120 military officials "abandon" armed forces amid growing pressure on Libyan leader.

Last Modified: 31 May 2011 03:10



Zuma's office insists that his visit to Tripoli was to address political reform and humanitarian concerns [AFP]

More than 100 military officials and soldiers have defected from Libya's armed forces in recent days, according to a group of eight military officers, as pressure mounts on leader Muammar Gaddafi to step down.

The high-ranking Libyan army officers appeared at a press conference in Italy on Monday, where they announced that they were part of a group of as many as 120 military officials and soldiers who defected from Gaddafi's side in recent days.

The hastily called news conference was organised by the Italian government for the the eight officers

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<sup>167</sup> "'Scores defect' from Gaddafi's armyEight high-ranking officers and 120 military officials "abandon" armed forces amid growing pressure on Libyan leader.." *Aljazeera*, May 31, 2011.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/05/20115308196965572.html> (accessed April 19, 2013).



- five generals, two colonels and a major.

"What is happening to our people has frightened us," said one officer, who identified himself as General Oun Ali Oun.

"There is a lot of killing, genocide ... violence against women. No wise, rational person with the minimum of dignity can do what we saw with our eyes and what he asked us to do."

Another officer, General Salah Giuma Yahmed, said Gaddafi's army was weakening day by day, with the force reduced to 20 per cent of its original capacity.

"Gaddafi's days are numbered," said Yahmed.

Abdurrahman Shalgam, the Libyan UN ambassador, who has also defected from Gaddafi, said all 120 military personnel were outside Libya now, but he did not say where they were.

The news conference came as Jacob Zuma, South Africa's president, travelled to Tripoli for talks to end the Libyan conflict.

## Soldier Says Syrian Atrocities Forced Him to Defect<sup>168</sup>



Daniel Etter for The New York Times

Ammar Cheikh Omar, center, a defector from the Syrian army to the opposition, played cards with other Syrian refugees at an apartment in Antakya, Turkey.

*By DAN BILEFSKY*

*Published: February 1, 2012*

HATAY, Turkey — Ammar Cheikh Omar recalled the first time he was ordered to shoot into a crowd of protesters in Syria. He aimed his AK-47 just above their heads, prayed to God not to make him a killer and pulled the trigger.

### Related

Mr. Omar, 29, the soft-spoken and wiry son of Syrian parents who immigrated to Germany in the 1950s, grew up in Rheda-Wiedenbrück, a prosperous village of half-timbered 16th-century houses, where he listened to Mariah Carey and daydreamed about one day returning to Syria.

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<sup>168</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "Soldier Says Syria Atrocities Forced Him to Defect," *The New York Times*, sec. Europe, February 1, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/world/europe/soldier-says-atrocities-made-him-a-syrian-defector.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 13, 2013),

Today, he is still trying to make sense of his unlikely transformation from a dutiful German student to a killer for the brutal Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad and, ultimately, a defector. “I was proud to be Syrian, but instead became a soldier for a regime that was intent on killing its own people,” Mr. Omar said on a recent day, chain-smoking at a cafe in this Turkish border town. “I thank God every day that I am still alive.”

Human rights groups and Syrian activists said he was one of thousands of Syrians who had inadvertently found themselves deployed as foot soldiers for a government that the United Nations estimates has killed more than 5,000 people since the crackdown on demonstrators began in March.

Soldiers are typically conscripted at age 18, with members of Syria’s Sunni majority making up the bulk of the army ranks and minority Alawites, who come from the same religious group as Mr. Assad, often serving as high-ranking officers or in the state security apparatus. Mr. Omar, a highly educated Sunni with flawless Arabic, gained entry to a security unit attached to the Interior Ministry.

Human rights groups estimate that there are at least 5,000 defectors; an exact number is difficult to confirm because many remain in hiding. “Mr. Omar’s harrowing tale fits an all-too-familiar pattern in which soldiers are deployed away from their hometowns to help ensure that they will be less likely to refuse an order to kill,” said Ole Solvang, a researcher at Human Rights Watch who has interviewed dozens of Syrian defectors, including Mr. Omar. “He was one of the lucky ones, as he managed to escape.”

There is no way to corroborate much of Mr. Omar’s account of his journey to becoming an enforcer for the Assad government. Though human rights groups and activists operating in Syria say it fits the pattern of hundreds of defectors who have fled the country, it is simply one man’s tale. It began in 2004 when he left Germany for Aleppo, in Syria’s north, with the aim of getting in touch with his roots, studying law, improving his Arabic and finding a wife.

He managed to do all that, entering law school, marrying a doctor and, eventually, having a child. His parents, meanwhile, had moved back to Aleppo because his father wanted to live out his final years in the old country.

In late 2010, Mr. Omar was conscripted into the Syrian military, just weeks before a Tunisian fruit seller immolated himself and set off the wave of regional protests that eventually buffeted Syria. At first, said Mr. Omar, who had always felt like an outsider in Germany, he was proud to be serving the government. Soldiers were initially told that their main task was to defend the country against Israel, he said. But when demonstrations erupted, they were told that the protesters were “terrorists” or “armed gangs” sponsored by foreign forces. Access to cellphones, non-state television or the Internet was strictly prohibited; breaching that rule was punishable by up to two months in jail.

Mr. Omar’s first deployment was in the southern city of Dara’a, near Jordan, where he and his 350-strong unit were sent in March to help crack down on intensifying demonstrations. He said he had been ordered to arrest and shoot at dozens of protesters, including many young students, who had scrawled antigovernment graffiti on the walls of the town.

“The army needed everyone. It was very brutal,” he said. “But if there’s an officer of the Mukhabarat next to you,” he added, referring to the country’s feared security services, “you don’t have a choice but to shoot.”

Every soldier was armed with 60 bullets and given new ammunition each night, Mr. Omar said. His unit shot at the protesters from above a roof overlooking the mosque, killing at least six people and wounding dozens more. One of his fellow soldiers began to scream uncontrollably when he realized that his 18-year-old brother, demonstrating below on the street, had been shot. The soldier buried him two days later.

Shaken by what he had seen, Mr. Omar said, he was determined to defect. But before he could act, he was sent to Duma, northeast of Damascus, the capital, to work in a security unit interrogating detainees.

Mr. Omar said he had been asked to take notes during the interrogation of prisoners, some as young as 15 years old. He said demonstrators had been blindfolded and forced to strip to their underwear before their hands were tied behind their backs. Interrogations were conducted by four or five soldiers and officers in a dark, windowless room. He said the interrogating officer

had ordered him to write down confessions naming protest leaders, confessions that detainees were then asked to finger stamp rather than sign, since their hands were bound.

To force confessions, Mr. Omar said, the soldiers tortured the detainees with electrified cattle prods, beat them or urinated on them. Some passed out. Others bled heavily. Many disappeared.

“The soldiers demanded to know why they had gone to the streets and who had paid them,” he recalled. “It was painful to watch. At the beginning I couldn’t sleep, but after a while, I got used to it. But I could not live with myself if I had remained.”

As the protests gathered pace over the summer, Mr. Omar was sent to the central city of Hama, where he was relieved of his AK-47 and instead given a shield and a stun gun, he said. With tens of thousands of people on the streets in Hama, he said, he hoped he could disappear into the crowd. At noon on July 26, he said, he and two fellow officers decided to defect from their army base, changing into civilian clothes and jumping over the base’s wall.

They found refuge in the homes of people opposed to the Assad government, Mr. Omar said, and wrapped scarves around their heads to conceal their faces. Fearing that he would be kidnapped or “disappeared” in Syria under some false pretext, Mr. Omar made a video, which he posted on YouTube, to establish that he had defected.

The defectors traveled to the Turkish border in daylight, eventually abandoning their car and walking through woods to avoid detection. At 7 a.m. on July 30, he said, they crossed illegally into Hatay, where they met up with members of the rebel Free Syrian Army, settling in a refugee camp.

At the camp, a gaunt and pale Mr. Omar produced another video to post on YouTube, in which he said he was ashamed that he had been part of Mr. Assad’s forces. “I will never forget the dead bodies of young and old men, but also women and children on the streets,” he said, dressed in a uniform of the Free Syrian Army and appearing with a Syrian flag.

Appealing directly to Germany, he added, “Hitler died in Germany, but awoke in Syria.”

Germany eventually helped get him out of the camp so he could get a stamp in his passport to remain in Turkey.

Mr. Omar joined the rebel army, a scruffy group numbering around 10,000 soldiers, whose mandate is to protect civilians from the government. He is now helping to smuggle wounded rebels into Turkey, some of whom he houses in his home. He said he supported the political demonstrations but warned, “We cannot afford to meet guns with only talk and slogans.”

He fears for his family, including his wife, their 1-year-old daughter and his parents. After his escape, he said, his brother-in-law was fired from his architecture job, and the family’s house in Aleppo was vandalized.

But he said he had no regrets. “My family knows I made the right choice.”

*Daniel Etter contributed reporting.*

*A version of this article appeared in print on February 2, 2012, on page A4 of the New York edition with the headline: Soldier Says Syrian Shootings and Torture Led Him to Defect.*